

BARBARA KINGSOLVER, LONESOME DOVE • SUSAN J. DOUGLAS TALKS BACK

In These Times

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False Choices



By Arundhati Roy



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Editorial

At the Gates of Power

In *These Times* is not a legitimate media outlet, or so says Mark Abraham of the Photographers' Gallery on Capitol Hill. In September, he denied photographer Jeremy Bigwood press credentials because one of his letters of reference was from *In These Times*, which, according to Abraham, was "too editorial."

In These Times does take editorial positions. And yes, *In These Times* reporters present a point of view, but so do their mainstream counterparts. It's just the agendas that are different. And yes, we are outraged at being excluded by Congress' media gatekeepers.

On the other hand, we can't help but take that rejection as a backhanded compliment. *In These Times* stands out these days because the for-profit media has been so uniformly gung-ho in endorsing the Bush administration's wartime strategies. Indeed, if this magazine were serving up what now passes for news, we would not be living up to our mission to provide "an accessible forum for debate about the public policies that shape our future." No public policy will shape our future, and that of our children, more than how the administration responds to the threat posed by Islamic extremists.

A united front is helpful in time of war. But when that front is being constructed by the same officials who oppose the Kyoto treaty on global warming, who have tried to scuttle the International Criminal Court and who, through the feint "economic stimulus," give the rich huge tax breaks (did someone say war profiteers?), we must turn a critical eye to the strategies being proposed—and blindly endorsed by the mainstream media under the banner of national unity.

Where in the media is an ongoing debate over U.S. policies that have fueled anger across the Islamic world? The sanctions and air strikes against Iraq have contributed to a humanitarian disaster that in the past 11 years has taken more than a million lives. These sanctions are needed, the U.S. government claims, to prod Iraq into compliance with U.N. resolutions. The United States has no corresponding compunction against Israel's refusal to comply with U.N. Security Council resolu-

tions, supported by the United States, that call on Israel to dismantle its settlements and then withdraw from the territories it occupied during the 1967 War.

Further, would it be too much to expect the media to explore the implications posed by casualty figures of the Palestinian Intifada. The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories reports that from September 29, 2000 to October 23, 2001, Israel security forces killed 603 Palestinians, including 492 civilians (40 of whom were extrajudicially executed) and 106 members of Palestinian security forces, while Israeli citizens killed 11 Palestinians. In the same period, Palestinian security forces killed eight members of Israeli security forces, while Palestinian civilians killed 165 Israelis, including 125 civilians and 40 members of Israeli security forces.

Though all the deaths are tragic, the situations of the combatants are hardly parallel. On one side, the armed forces of a democratic state supported with billions of dollars in U.S. aid are doing the killing. On the other, the killing is committed by terrorists who operate outside the control of the Palestinian National Authority.

Yet the Bush administration has been hesitant to condemn the Israeli military attacks on the Occupied Territories, much less endorse the Palestinian struggle for independence or demand the dismantlement of Israeli settlements—a stance that is endorsed, indeed encouraged, by the mainstream press.

Many in the Islamic world believe that U.S. policies put little value on Muslim lives—a perception not easily refuted. Add the bombing of Afghanistan, which has already taken civilian lives, and one can make a case that Osama bin Laden is only the beginning. All of which raises obvious questions about the wisdom of current U.S. policy—questions that have yet to be granted a hearing by those members of the press deemed worthy of congressional press credentials.

—Joel Bleifuss

If *In These Times* served up what now passes for news, we would not be living up to our mission.

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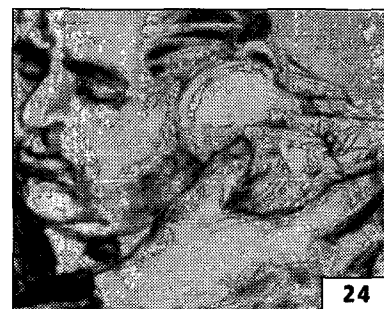
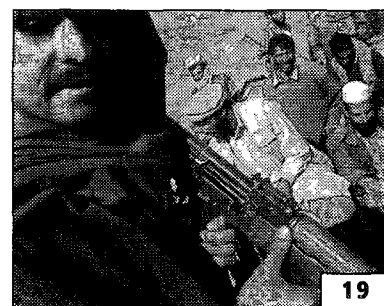
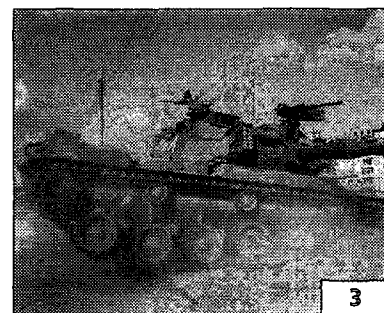
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By Barbara Kingsolver

I cannot find the glory in this day.

Cover photos: Getty Images



Letters

No Appeasement

My father, a lifelong Marxist, proudly served in the U.S. armed forces during World War II. His generation understood the need to confront evil with armed resistance.

Sadly, many modern "leftists" are so suffused with anti-Americanism, pacifism and moral relativism as to seem incapable of making such crucial moral distinctions. This part of the modern "left," as exemplified by the articles in your October 29 issue, argues that any American military action is morally indistinguishable from Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda.

What silliness. The civilized world has a responsibility to defend itself against those who, steeped in fanatical Islam, would destroy the very freedoms that allow such "leftists" to speak their minds.

I do not for a moment excuse past American wrongdoing in many parts of the globe. But to deny the necessity of confronting the evil that bin Laden and the Taliban represent is the equivalent of saying that Hitler should not have been confronted because the Allies, through the onerous treaties that concluded World War I, helped bring about the conditions that permitted fascism to flourish.

David Koppelman
Los Angeles

Secular Strategy

The other day, I, who am a Christian, sat down with two of my good friends here in Costa Rica—a Jew and a Muslim.

We boiled down what was going on in real time. The Islamic theocratic fascists attack us. We counterattack. They hope that counterattack will enrage the theocratic fundamentalist population in Muslim countries and bring down secular governments and turn the Islamic world into a total theocracy.

That's the program in simplistic terms. Will the Islamic theocratic fascists succeed? Our strategy must be to assist Islamic secularists to defeat Islamic fascists in the immediate and long term.

Frederick Ellis
San Juan de Tibas, Costa Rica

Open Hearts and Minds

I was very disappointed with Joel Bleifuss' October 29 editorial ("Say No to War").

His logic is flawed. By providing the British and Spanish response to terrorism as an example to follow, he misses the point that al-Qaeda is being protected by the Taliban government. The British and Spanish strategies are not available to us.

His suggestion that al-Qaeda be prosecuted by the United Nations is a hope that I would second, but the forces opposing the United States also appear to be opposed to the United Nations.

This leads us to a question of war. We are in a war whether we want it or not. The only reason al-Qaeda has not used nuclear weapons is that it does not have them—yet. If we do not go after al-Qaeda and the Taliban, we will be doomed to suffer increased attacks. Yet the whole point of al-Qaeda is to get the West and Muslim states into a war.

There may be an opening in the current crisis to support a more open foreign policy toward the Middle East. The war will demand that the United States pay more attention to the hearts and minds of Muslim countries. And that should result in a more evenhanded approach to Israel and Palestine.

Daniel Adkins
Arlington, Virginia

Superficial Read

I have become increasingly disturbed by *In These Times*' pattern of misleadingly skimming the surface of complex issues. Annette Fuentes' "Where Have all the Liberals Gone?" (October 29) is the latest example.

Fuentes claims Congress has abrogated its constitutional duty and granted President Bush some "vast authority" to wage war anytime, anywhere, at any cost, against anyone when it approved the use of force resolution in September.

The War Powers Resolution that Congress passed in 1973 acknowledges the president can introduce U.S. troops into hostile situations without congressional authorization during "a national emergency created by attack upon the United States," which the September 11 strikes clearly are.

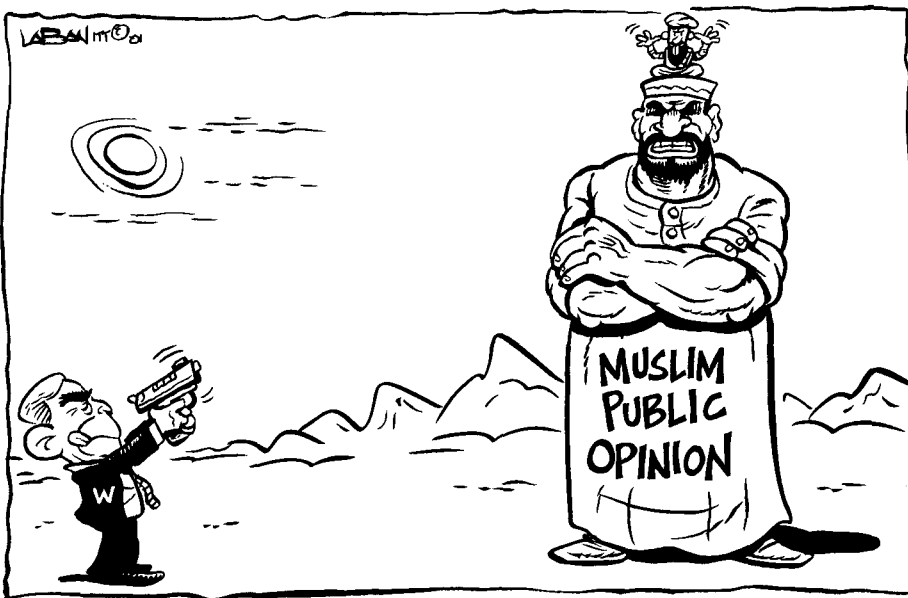
Therefore, the consideration for progressive members of Congress was not whether to grant Bush authority to use the U.S. military. You don't need to grant the president authority he already has. Instead, progressives worked to block an egregious giveaway of additional authority by demanding a number of safeguards in the final bill to ensure congressional oversight.

For example, unlike the original draft, the final draft limits the president to retaliating against only those nations, organizations or persons responsible for the September 11 attacks and to deter future acts of terrorism by those same perpetrators. In other words, the president cannot attack Iraq or anyone else without first tying them to the September 11 attacks. To do otherwise would violate the law.

Questions about the wisdom of military action deserve to be debated. However, the left does a disservice to the debate by misrepresenting the work of progressives in Congress and ignoring the nuances of public policy.

Tom Vinson
Washington

Terry LaBan



Left Behind

Israel's Labor Party is silenced as violence erupts

By Charmaine Seitz

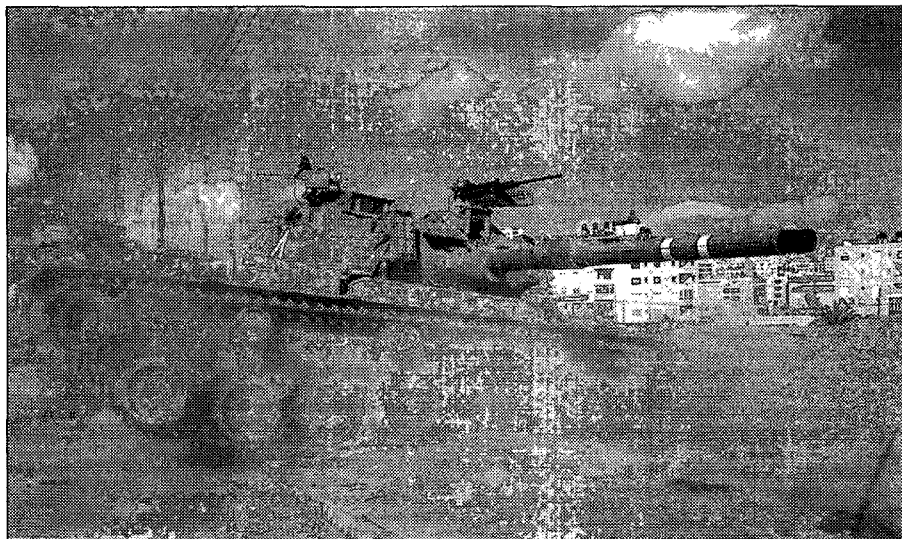
JERUSALEM—"You, who killed my father, you are temporary residents and Canaanites. I'm letting you know: We are staying because [the land] is ours." That was how the son of Israel's slain tourism minister warned Palestinians when he spoke at the state funeral.

In life, Rehavam Zeevi was the modern incarnation of ideas many Israelis thought had disappeared. Zeevi, who advocated the physical transfer of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip, only came into his ministerial seat on the heels of right-wing Prime Minister Ariel Sharon in February. Two days before Zeevi was killed on October 17 by Palestinian assassins, he had tendered his resignation in protest of government policies he believed were soft on Arabs.

But in his death, Zeevi may have brought to pass both the final downfall of a meaningful Israeli left, as well as a further hobbling of the Palestinian leadership governing parts of the Occupied Territories. "Listen well, killers of Ramallah, listen well, assassins of Jenin," said Knesset speaker and leading Labor official Avraham Burg in his eulogy. "All our differences are not weaknesses, but differences. ... We will not surrender."

In retaliation for the killing, the Israeli government took a series of dramatic steps. First, it reimposed a blockade on Palestinian towns and villages that had been eased two days earlier as part of a joint ceasefire. Next, it invaded six Palestinian towns and left its tanks to patrol those areas, including almost all of the town of Bethlehem. Twenty-two Palestinians, a number of them women and children, were killed over four days. Palestinian fighters resisted the invasion, injuring nine Israeli soldiers. Finally, Sharon's government shrewdly demanded that the Palestinian Authority hand over the assassins from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine who killed Zeevi.

The Palestinian leadership, aware that its people will not accept a handover,



ABBAS MOMANI/AF PHOTO

staunchly rejected the Israeli demand but outlawed the Popular Front's military wing. "There is no chance of such an extradition—and whoever drafted the Israeli ultimatum knew this well and planned his steps accordingly," wrote analyst Danny Rubenstein in the Israeli daily *Ha'aretz*. "In other words, this ultimatum is in fact not an ultimatum, but a declaration of war."

Appalled by the army's invasion, some members of the Labor Party have loudly expressed their concern. "We are very close to a brink," says Matan Vilnai, Israel's culture, science and sports minister. "Maybe we are going to cross it. It is the brink of a Lebanon-style operation. I hope we will be clever enough and smart enough to examine the situation and not ... cross this red line."

The evoking of Israel's war in Lebanon, in which then Defense Minister Sharon led the Israeli army all the way to Beirut, is further indication of unease. That 1982 incursion ended in the Palestine Liberation Organization's banishment from Beirut and the killing of more than 1,000 Palestinian refugees by Lebanese Maronite forces under Israeli army watch.

Foreign Minister Shimon Peres has already hinted that he felt misled in discussions of how far the Israeli army would go inside the Palestinian-controlled areas. As a result, Peres wants out of the government coalition, say some analysts. The very identity of the Labor Party could be at stake. "The Labor Party has to have its own profile," says Open University of Israel professor Benny Noberger. "Even if it is in the

"Israel is on its own," Sharon told the Knesset.

government, it has to be clear that it is influencing policy. Otherwise, in the next election, it will disintegrate."

Since the Labor Party joined the right-of-center Likud in the government, it has been plagued by infighting and disputes. The Palestinian-Israeli confrontations that broke out last September, and the widespread belief that peace with Palestinians is no longer possible, have caused a mass exodus from Israel's left flank.

The party at the heart of Israel's creation, the roots of the *kibbutz* movement and the ideology of Zionist founder Theodor Herzl himself could be reduced to a position as Israel's fourth largest political party (behind Likud, ultra-orthodox Shas and far-left Meretz) if it does not now distinguish itself in meaningful opposition.

Slowly but prudently, Sharon has followed a policy of assassinating Palestinian activists, invading Palestinian-controlled territory and economically weakening Palestinian businesses as a way of undermining the peace process begun in Oslo in 1993, which he has always opposed. "Oslo is not continuing," Sharon told a group of settlers at a meeting last week. "There won't be Oslo. Oslo is over."

This week, the prime minister pointedly defied a blunt U.S. request that he withdraw the army, telling the Knesset that "Israel is on its own."

The few remaining on the Israeli left fear that Sharon is headed for catastrophe. In an editorial last month, journalist Amira Hass noted the dangers of a weakened opposition in the context of a

distracting American war. "Skepticism that Israel may try to expel the country's Arabs ... is natural and encouraging," she wrote. "It shows that the majority of Jewish Israelis accept as an unequivocal fact that the Palestinians are natives of this land." Still, Hass warns, now is the time to ask, "Is Israeli society immune to an idea such as the transfer of the Palestinian population as a 'solution' to the protracted conflict?"

A poll taken just after Zeevi's assassination gave credence to Hass' concern: 66 percent of Israeli adults surveyed said they would support a "voluntary transfer" of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

While one advocate of transferring Palestinians through military force is now dead, the specter of his ideas remains a living possibility. ■

Trigger Happy

Bush administration hawks
want to deploy "mini-nukes"
against Osama bin Laden

By Jeffrey St. Clair

How should the Pentagon get Osama bin Laden? With a discreetly placed nuke, says Rep. Steven Buyer, the right-wing congressman from northern Indiana. "Don't send special forces in there to sweep," Buyer told an Indianapolis TV station. "We'd be very naive to believe that biotoxins and chemical agents were not in these caves. Put a tactical nuclear device in and close these caves for a thousand years."

Buyer doesn't just want to kill bin Laden and his Taliban cohort. He wants to send a message to the world that America is now willing to use nuclear weapons on the battlefield. "I just want the [Bush] administration to know that I think the United States needs to send a message to the world that we are prepared to do that," he says.

During his campaigns, Buyer has relentlessly pushed his service as a Gulf War vet. He touts himself as an expert on "asymmetrical warfare," Pentagon-speak for attacks waged on U.S. targets by terrorists using unconventional

weapons. Buyer wants to smoke them out with radioactive weapons.

Admittedly, Buyer is one of the kookier members of Congress. But he is far from a lone voice. A day after the World Trade Center attacks, Sen. Robert Torricelli, the New Jersey Democrat, vowed that the United States would "unleash hell upon them." And Buyer's view was echoed by Rep. Peter King, a New York Republican, in a radio interview on October 21. "I would never rule out tactical nuclear weapons if I thought they could do the job, and if they were needed," King told WABC. "If the military people said we think certain chemical weapons are going to be used, we know where they are, and the only way we can stop their use is by using tactical nuclear weapons."

Among the wizards of Armageddon, there is an almost palpable desire to see nuclear weapons put to use on the battlefield. The frail doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction has been jettisoned with the wreckage of the Soviet Union, and in its place nuclear war planners are pushing a more robust and offensive role for the U.S. nuclear stockpile. Two weeks after September 11, the *Japan Times* reported that Pentagon war planners had presented Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and President Bush with a scenario for the use of tactical nuclear weapons in Afghanistan. The Tokyo newspaper quoted a Pentagon source, who said that Bush had rejected the option, fearing almost certain global backlash.

However, Rumsfeld was more circumspect when he was asked directly on ABC's *This Week* whether the United States was considering the use of nuclear weapons against al-Qaeda and the Taliban. "We ought to be very proud of the record of humanity, that we have not used those weapons for 55 years," he told Sam Donaldson. "And we have to find as many ways as possible to deal with this serious problem of terrorism."

But Rumsfeld's cagey response was actually a significant statement that may signal a chilling shift in U.S. policy. Since the mid-'70s, the official U.S. line has been that it will not use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear nations. Rumsfeld's deputy, the hyper-hawkish Paul Wolfowitz, has warned the Taliban that the United States will "use a very large hammer."

In case the Taliban had trouble reading between the lines, Thomas Woodrow, a Wolfowitz pal and veteran of the Defense Intelligence Agency, made the point clear in a column for the *Washington Times*. "At a bare minimum, tactical nuclear capabilities should be used against the bin Laden camps in the desert of Afghanistan," Woodrow wrote. "To do less would be rightly seen by the poisoned minds that orchestrated these attacks as cowardice on the part of the United States and the current administration."

The bomb of choice seems to be low-yield nuclear weapons, the so-called bunker-buster nukes that could be used as a kind of radioactive assassination weapon, designed to knock out the leadership of hostile regimes. In this twisted logic, proponents are pushing the bomb as a humanitarian device that could save civilian lives. "We've seen examples as recently as the air war with Serbia, when we attacked underground targets with conventional weapons with very little effect," said Paul Robinson, director of the Sandia National Laboratory, in a September interview with the *National Journal*. "It just takes far too many aircraft sorties and conventional weapons to give you any confidence that you can take out underground bunkers. By putting a nuclear warhead on one of those weapons instead of high explosives, you would multiply the explosive power by a factor of more than a million."

There's another reason the nuclear hawks are pushing the idea of shifting the U.S. nuclear arsenal toward the low-yield nukes: They can develop new weapons without (in their minds, at least) violating the non-proliferation treaty. "We would neither have to conduct testing nor redesign for such a weapon, because we have them already," Robinson said. "We could develop these lower-yield weapons without forcing the nuclear testing issue back onto the table, with a richer database of past tests, and at relatively low cost."

It seems very unlikely that the United States would use nuclear weapons against the Taliban. However, the nuclear hawks and their allies in the bomb-making industries seem to have succeeded in exploiting the war in an effort to breathe life (and billions of dollars) a new generation of nuclear weaponry. ■

Opportunity Knocks

Under cover of war, the
Bush administration
pushes for fast track

By Jeff Shaw

California Rep. Bill Thomas and his free-trade allies are now pushing a new and even more virulent version of "fast track" trade promotion authority, a bill that could have devastating impacts on the environment and labor if passed. Their full-court press attempts to pass the bill are now coming to a head. Democrats and fair trade advocates are gearing up for a fight.

The president is having personal meetings with undecided legislators, while Secretary of State Colin Powell has written an op-ed in the *Wall Street Journal* arguing for fast track. And U.S. Trade Representative Robert Zoellick, in a cynical attempt to capitalize on tragedy, declared that free trade "promotes the values at the heart of this protracted struggle" little more than a week after the disaster on September 11. Congress is expected to adjourn in early November, so the coming few weeks could be a watershed if the Thomas legislation comes to a vote.

The administration wants to have fast track authority in time for the WTO meetings in Qatar beginning on November 9. With this legislation in his pocket, Bush would be able to push through new trade agreements under the auspices of the WTO without any opportunity for meaningful congress-

sional or public involvement. The legislation would require Congress to vote simply "yes" or "no" on any proposed trade deal without debate.

In 1998, an alliance of unions and greens beat back fast track legislation, and prior to the September 11 attacks, Democratic opposition to fast track was vociferous. Since then, public criticism has been muted, perhaps owing to the new emphasis on unity in wartime—or to people like Zoellick's call for free trade as a litmus test for loyalty.

"Terrorists hate the ideas America has championed around the world," Zoellick said in a speech before the Institute for International Economics on September 24. "It is inevitable that people will wonder if there are intellectual connections with others who have turned to violence to attack international finance, globalization and the United States."

Home Loans: Still Racist

A report released in October by the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) reveals remarkably widespread discrimination against minority groups applying for home loans. The study, based on 2000 data collected under the Home Mortgage Disclosure Act and profiling more than 60 cities, found that African-Americans were more than twice as likely, and Latinos one and a half times as likely, to be turned down for home loans as white applicants. That figure increases sharply in places like Milwaukee and Chicago, where African-Americans are more than four times as likely as whites to be denied loans. Even wealthy African-Americans were rejected more than twice as often as whites from the same income bracket; they were even turned down more often than whites who earned half as much.

Residents of any low-income neighborhood, regardless of race, were three times as likely to be denied a home loan as those living in wealthier communities. "Homeownership is the single most important source of wealth and savings for minority and low-income families, and thus of stability for their communities," says ACORN National President Maude Hurd. "Years of drawing attention to these disparities, and of demanding action to change them, have begun to win some results—total conventional lending to minorities increased slightly in the last year—but we have much further to go."

Kurds on Film

Good Kurds, Bad Kurds: No Friends but the Mountains, a documentary directed by Kevin McKiernan with cinematographer Haskell Wexler depicts a decade's worth of Kurdish struggle for self-determination in Turkey and Iraq. Beginning during the

Gulf War, McKiernan's original footage exposes the effects of shifting U.S. policy and media attention toward the Kurds—supported by the West in Iraq for fighting Saddam Hussein, but ignored when they were oppressed by Turkey, a NATO ally. The film is airing on PBS stations this fall as part of its "Independent Lens" series.

Guest Workers Go Wireless

A little-noted addition to Gov. Gray Davis' recent spate of liberal legislation in California—which strengthens rights for same-sex domestic partners and allows the "morning-after" pill to be dispensed at pharmacies without a prescription—also gave Peruvian guest workers in the state a raise, access to heat, water and a refrigerator, and cell phones. The nearly 1,000 workers, who herd and care for sheep in the Sierra Mountains, have been living on a federally set wage of \$900 a month (they got a \$150 raise). The new law requires employers to provide cell phones in case of emergency for the isolated workers, who have worked in the mountain ranges on temporary visas for decades.

In Solidarity

Thousands of union members are out of work following the September 11 attacks, and unions across the country are mourning the loss of members killed. For those wishing to help, tax-deductible donations can be sent to the following addresses.

AFSCME September 11 Fund
1625 L Street NW
Washington, DC 20036

SEIU September 11 Relief Fund
1313 L Street NW
Washington, DC 20005

HERE New York Assistance Fund
Judson Memorial Church
55 Washington Square South
New York, NY 10012

CWA Disaster Relief Fund
Attn: Janine Brown
501 3rd Street NW
Washington, DC 20001

—Kristie Reilly



The Thomas bill has been extraordinarily polarizing. Even free-trade hawks like Washington's Jim McDermott—one of 12 Democrats who voted for fast track in 1998—are balking. The vote on the Ways and Means Committee that sent the bill to a floor vote was telling: 13 of the 15 Democrats present, including career-long free-trade backers, voted against the bill. Along with Charles Rangel (D-New York) and Sander Levin (D-Michigan), Robert Matsui (D-California) even penned a stern letter to colleagues urging Democrats to rally against the bill.

Their criticisms? That virtually no labor-standards requirements are contained therein; that the bill "does not address key problems" in environmental protection; and that Thomas' effort cuts Congress out of its constitutional role, making "no attempt" to involve legislators "at key junctures of the negotiating process."

Opponents also speculate that, if Thomas and his allies can't rally the necessary votes, the bill won't be brought to the House floor. "The pro-trade proponents don't want to suffer the humiliating loss they suffered in 1998

again," says Patrick Woodall, research director of Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch. "If they don't bring it to a vote, the forces of fair trade have won."

For the Thomas bill to pass the House, its sponsors need to maintain steady Republican support and get at least 20 to 25 Democrats on board. That means undecided congressional Democrats are at a premium, and the choices they make in the next few days are all the more crucial. ■

Jeff Shaw is a freelance writer based in Washington State.



Friendly Skies 6.5

With enlightenment comes suffering. Neil Godfrey, a rather ordinary 22-year-old, found this out the hard way in early October when he tried to board a United Airlines flight in Philadelphia. As he checked in, according to the *Philadelphia City Paper*, he was told he'd been randomly chosen for a baggage search.

No problem, thought young Neil, until the security guard riffling through his bags unearthed *Hayduke Lives!*, Edward Abbey's novel about an eco-terrorist. One glance at the novel's cover, which showed a hand grasping dynamite, and Godfrey's goose was cooked.

After passing through security, Godfrey sat reading near his boarding gate when he was approached by a national guardsman. In short order, he was pleading his case before a dozen Philly cops, state troopers and airport dicks. After 45 minutes of grilling the kid, passing around the book and taking notes, the lawmen allowed that his taste in literature posed no threat to the public and gave him the go-ahead to fly to Phoenix.

But before he could board the airplane, a United employee informed him that he would not be allowed on the flight after all. Crestfallen, Godfrey went home and called his mother. She got in touch with the airline and, after apparently sorting things out, booked him on a United flight scheduled later that afternoon. He headed back to the airport, leaving the Abbey novel at home in favor of a more innocuous Harry Potter title.

Attempting to pass through security again, Godfrey was colared by a cop who recognized him from the earlier incident. The young man was detained yet again as four security people examined the Harry Potter book. After 20 minutes, Godfrey found himself in an interrogation room facing 15 officials. After a pat-down, he was let go—only to learn that United had again refused to let him fly.

Plus Ça Change ... 2.4

From www.anthrax.com: "In light of current events, we are changing the name of the band to something more friendly, 'Basket Full Of Puppies.' ... In the twenty years we've been known as 'Anthrax,' we never thought the day would come that our name would actually mean what it really means. When I learned about anthrax in my senior year biology class, I thought the name sounded 'metal.' ... Now in the wake of those events, our name symbolizes fear, paranoia and death. Suddenly our name is not so cool. To be associated with these things we are against is a strange and stressful situation. To us, and to millions of people, it is just a name. We don't want to change the name of the band, not because it would be a pain in the ass, but because we hope that no further negative events will happen and it won't be necessary. We hope and pray that this problem goes away quietly and we all grow old and fat together."

... La Mème Chose 6.9

Everything is supposed to have changed, and yet ... The *New York Post* reports that American investors are more bullish than ever on corrections-industry stocks. In anticipation of the coming demand for war-related interment facilities—and brisk growth of the federal prison population—some share prices for private-sector prison providers have climbed by as much as 300 percent.

Meanwhile, the English Ministry of Defense has announced it will deny life insurance coverage for the nation's men and women in uniform who aren't lucky enough to be enrolled in the program already. According to Britain's Sky News, a government spokeswoman explained that such a policy "is quite common for private insurers."

Finally, Time Inc. has fired its entire mailroom staff. Is this to punish the flunkies for letting the dread anthrax penetrate the *cordon sanitaire*? No, alas, it is business as usual. They're outsourcing the job.

—Dave Mulcahey



Punitive Measures

By Silja J.A. Talvi

LINCOLN, NEBRASKA—Lonnie Thomas did just fine during his first few years in the Nebraska State Penitentiary. He completed college courses and earned a degree in business administration. He attended a support group for HIV-positive prisoners like himself. He was a "model prisoner" and an excellent candidate for parole, says his attorney Amy Miller.

That was until Thomas filed for protective custody from a cellmate who regularly threatened to rape him. The prison promptly placed Thomas in solitary confinement on July 23, 1997. And there he sat, and waited, to be returned to safer conditions in the general population. Only that time never came. "He asked for help," says Miller, a staff lawyer with the Nebraska ACLU, "and they just threw away the lock and key."

Prisons may confine an inmate to "solitary"—officially known as "administrative confinement"—for any number of reasons, including violent behavior or having sex with a cellmate. Segregation may last months or years, particularly when a prison decides that an inmate is too dangerous, too violent or too crazy to be anywhere but in solitary.

Thomas is neither violent nor crazy, Miller says, yet he has spent more than four years in an 8-by-10-foot cell, where he sits and sleeps 24 hours a day with the exception of an hour of outdoor recreation on weekdays. No one at Nebraska State Penitentiary, a medium- and maximum-security state prison in Lincoln, has told him exactly why.

Thomas, a 30-year-old African-American, was admitted to the penitentiary on November 30, 1994, on an eight-year sentence for check forgery. Described by Miller as "gentle and very effeminate in his manner," Thomas is gay, and was known to be HIV positive when he started serving his time.

"I have been in segregation longer than I was ever in the general population here," Thomas wrote in a letter to Nebraska Republican Gov. Mike Johanns in July. "Yes, I got myself in prison and was [prepared] to do my time, [but] I didn't know I'd be treated so badly."

In many state prisons with no official segregation policy, HIV-positive prisoners are still sent into solitary confinement—often with dire consequences, says Merrick Buckingham, executive director of My Brother's Keeper, a Washington, nonprofit focused on HIV-positive gay, bisexual, lesbian and transgendered prisoners of color.

"Segregation is a death sentence," he says. "They put you away and wait for you to die. It fuels the fire for infection behind bars, since people will not seek out testing if they know that they might be placed in segregation."

At the onset of the AIDS epidemic, prisons routinely segregated HIV-positive and AIDS-diagnosed prisoners. Seventy-five percent of prisoners with AIDS were segregated in 1985. Today, roughly six percent of prisoners with AIDS are segregated. Only three states in the U.S. still practice some form of segregation of HIV-positive prisoners as a matter of official policy: Alabama, Mississippi and South Carolina.

According to a July report from the Bureau of Justice Statistics, prison deaths attributable to AIDS-related illnesses have declined sharply since 1995, largely because of the availability of anti-retroviral drug treatments. But the number of prisoners testing positive for HIV grew at a rate of six percent between 1995 and 1999, making the rate of confirmed AIDS cases in U.S. prisons five times that of AIDS cases on the outside. A survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control in 1996 and 1997 concluded that only 10 percent of state and federal prisons offered comprehensive HIV-prevention programs for inmates.

Win Barber, spokesman for the Nebraska State Penitentiary, says that inmates at the institution are not put in segregation "solely because they are HIV positive," pointing out that several HIV-positive prisoners do reside in the general population. The reasons why an inmate such as Thomas might be confined to a

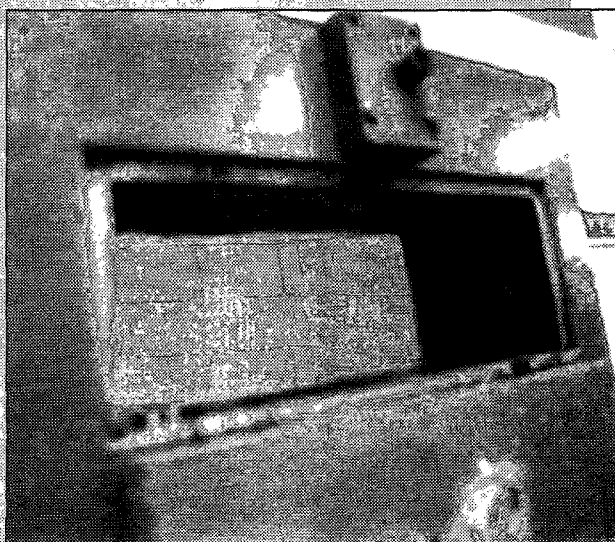
specific housing facility, says Barber, "are not a matter of public record."

When Thomas first went before the Nebraska State Penitentiary segregation committee he was told only that he engaged in unspecified "high-risk behavior." However, in at least five hearings since 1997, the committee has recommended that Thomas be released from solitary, Miller says. Each time, the warden appealed the decision and won.

Thomas has tried to win his release from segregation through the court system as well, but a summary judgment in favor of the state was issued before his lawsuit went to trial. Miller is now pursuing an appeal to the Nebraska Supreme Court. "Even under a bare constitutional minimum," she says, "you cannot call it due process if you do not tell a person why [he is] in solitary. And if you can retain him in solitary without telling him why he's there, then you have to provide minimal care and counseling."

"I am not only fighting HIV," Thomas wrote in his letter to the governor, "but due to the isolation of segregation, I'm deeply depressed."

The prison's parole committee has mandated that Thomas complete mental health classes to be eligible for early release, Miller says. But, cruelly, those kinds of classes are not available to prisoners in the segregation unit, so it is likely that Thomas will serve the rest of his sentence—through July 2002—in his one-man cell. ■



Patriots and Scoundrels

By Susan J. Douglas

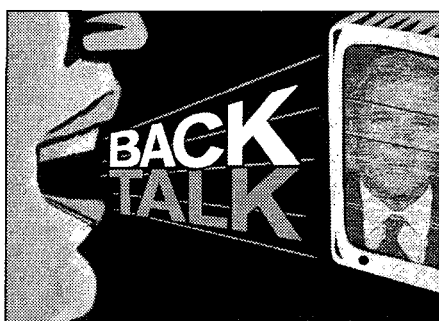
It has been hard, these past few weeks, not to feel helpless, depressed, fearful and, most of all, erased. Ari Fleischer warned Americans to “watch what they say,” but in case some failed to obey this edict, many in the media ensured that views deviating even slightly from those of Donald Rumsfeld were censored, condemned or both. Who needs Fleischer when you have Thomas Friedman or Jonathan Alter—who would have rather circumscribed careers without the First Amendment—telling Americans, especially young Americans, to shut up and pledge allegiance?

From *The Economist*’s “Treason of the Intellectuals,” to Tim Russert’s show on CNBC where Friedman expressed his deep disappointment with college students who questioned administration policy, to Alter’s semi-hysterical smear “Blame America at Your Peril” in *Newsweek* (not to mention Michael Kelly’s already infamous assertions in the *Washington Post* that pacifists are “objectively pro-terrorist,” “evil” and “liars”), some journalists are taking up Fleischer’s banner and launching a nice little ideological *jihād* of their own. As Alter, a serial ‘60s-basher put it, the left (of his imagination) is “unforgivably out to lunch” and “knee-deep in ignorant and dangerous appeasement.” What we need to do is shut up because “it’s kill or be killed.”

All of these attacks begin, as smears usually do, by utterly distorting what many on the left have been saying. Maybe I’m on the wrong listserve, but I have heard no one justifying the September 11 attacks or expressing sympathy for the Taliban, as *The Economist* and Alter suggest. And even though both articles condemn left-wing “appeasement” (so they can liken us to Nazi sympathizers), who on the left has been urging that we “appease” bin Laden?

Instead, many have argued that the attacks were a reprehensible criminal act, and that whoever was responsible should indeed be hunted down and brought to justice. We see this as a hideous crime, but we don’t see war as

the solution. In fact, many of us fear that the current policy of bombing what little remains of Afghanistan and its benighted people (especially its women!) will, in addition to killing innocent civilians, do little to end international terrorism and, indeed, make matters much worse.



Why might those of us so “out to lunch” think that? Well, for starters, Bush the First’s jolly little war in the region made the material existence of millions of Iraqis, especially children, much worse without hurting Saddam Hussein one bit. Alter says that after the 1993 bombing of the World Trade Center, we “tried turning the other cheek” and it didn’t work. If U.S. policies in the Middle East have been “turning the other cheek,” I’d hate to see what belligerence is. Maybe Alter, patriot that he is, is perfectly happy to associate himself with government policies that have helped kill more than 500,000 Iraqi kids since 1990, but I, patriot that I am, am not. I think our country can and should do better, and I think that liberals and progressives have a right to say so.

The Economist says “there is a worrying confusion between (legitimate) explanations and (unwarranted) justification of last month’s terror.” Maybe at *The Economist*, but not in the pieces I’ve been reading. Many left-liberals question the sanctions in Iraq, our country’s ongoing support of the autocratic and repressive Saudi regime, and the use of American weapons to kill Palestinians. But it is a viscous slander to assert that “the left” feels the attacks were “deserved.” Andrew Sullivan went

so far as to suggest that we are a pro-terrorist “Fifth Column.” I would think those who seek to silence other views, stifle dissent and condemn peace proposals are serving the forces behind this brand of terrorism much better than we ever could, especially since they actually have mass circulation media outlets as podiums.

Alter, Kelly and others might look to the example of CNN’s intrepid Christiane Amanpour. In addition to her gutsy reporting from the front, Amanpour hosted a CNN special on October 13 titled “An In-Depth Look at Islam.” She powerfully reminded viewers that the American and Arab media present almost diametrically opposed views of the region. Until recently, Americans barely saw anything at all except telegraphic coverage of the escalating conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. The Arab press and the Al-Jazeera network, however, repeatedly show their viewers the children in Iraq suffering from the sanctions, Israel’s use of American weapons and even critics of the Saudi regime.

Americans need to know how their government’s policies are being represented in the rest of the world, and they need informed public debate about

Who on the left has been urging that we ‘appease’ Osama bin Laden or the Taliban?

those policies. The lesson is simple: We don’t need less information and commentary, we need more. You would think that journalists and commentators, of all people, would be the first to insist upon this principle. ■

Susan J. Douglas is a professor of communication studies at the University of Michigan whose new column will appear regularly. She is the author of Where the Girls Are: Growing up Female with the Mass Media and, most recently, Listening In: Radio and the American Imagination. Douglas is currently working on an examination of how motherhood has been portrayed in the mass media from the late ‘60s to the present.

New World Disorder

War is peace. So now we know.

By Arundhati Roy

NEW DELHI

As darkness deepened over Afghanistan on October 7, the U.S. government, backed by the International Coalition Against Terror (the new, amenable substitute for the United Nations), launched air strikes against Afghanistan. TV channels lingered on computer-animated images of cruise missiles, stealth bombers, tomahawks and bunker-busting missiles. All over the world, little boys watched goggle-eyed and stopped clamoring for new video games.

The U.N., reduced now to an ineffective acronym, wasn't even asked to mandate the air strikes. (As Madeleine Albright once said, "The U.S. acts multilaterally when it can, and unilaterally when it must.") The "evidence" against the terrorists was shared amongst friends in the coalition. After conferring, they announced that it didn't matter whether or not the "evidence" would stand up in a court of law.

Nothing can excuse or justify an act of terrorism, whether it is committed by religious fundamentalists, private militia, people's resistance movements—or whether it's dressed up as a war of retribution by a recognized government. The bombing of Afghanistan is not revenge for New York and Washington. It is yet another act of terror against the people of the world. Each innocent person that is killed must be *added to*, not set off against, the grisly toll of civilians who died in New York and Washington.

People rarely win wars, governments rarely lose them. People get killed. Governments molt and regroup, hydra-headed. They first use flags to shrink-wrap peoples' minds and smother real thought, and then as ceremonial shrouds to cover the mangled remains of the willing dead. On both sides, in Afghanistan as well as America, civilians are now hostage to the actions of their own governments. Unknowingly, ordinary people in both countries share a common bond—they have to live with the phenomenon of blind, unpredictable terror. Each batch of bombs that is dropped on Afghanistan is matched by a corresponding escalation of mass hysteria in America about anthrax, more hijackings and other terrorist acts.

There is no easy way out of the spiraling morass of terror and brutality that confronts the world today. It is time now for the human race to hold still, to delve into its wells of collective wisdom, both ancient and modern. What happened on September 11 changed the world forever. Freedom, progress, wealth, technology, war—these words have taken on new meaning. Governments have to acknowledge this transformation, and approach their new tasks with a modicum of honesty and humility. Unfortunately, up to now, there has been no sign of

any introspection from the leaders of the International Coalition Against Terror. Or the Taliban.

When he announced the air strikes, President George W. Bush said, "We're a peaceful nation." America's favorite ambassador, Tony Blair (who also holds the portfolio of British prime minister), echoed him: "We're a peaceful people."

So now we know. Pigs are horses. Girls are boys. War is Peace.



A false choice.

States of America. The most free nation in the world. A nation built on fundamental values that rejects hate, rejects violence, rejects murderers and rejects evil. And we will not tire."

Here is a partial list of the countries that America has been at war with—overtly and covertly—since World War II: China, Korea, Guatemala, Indonesia, Cuba, the Belgian Congo, Peru, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Grenada, Libya, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Panama, Iraq, Sudan, Yugoslavia. And now Afghanistan.

Certainly it does not tire—this, the most free nation in the world. What freedoms does it uphold? *Within* its borders, the freedoms of speech, religion, thought; of artistic expression, food habits, sexual preferences (well, to some extent) and many other exemplary, wonderful things. *Outside* its borders, the freedom to dominate, humiliate and subjugate—usually in the service of America's real religion, the "free market." So when the U.S. government christens a war "Operation

Infinite Justice," or "Operation Enduring Freedom," we in the Third World feel more than a tremor of fear. Because we know that Infinite Justice for some means Infinite Injustice for others. And Enduring Freedom for some means Enduring Subjugation for others.

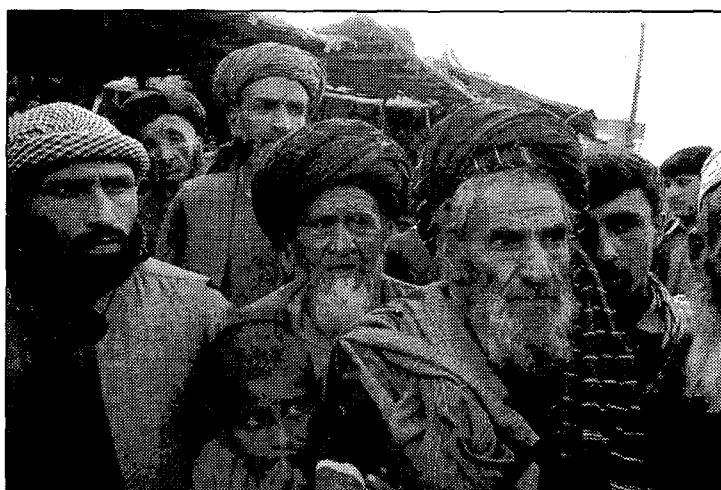
The International Coalition Against Terror is largely a cabal of the richest countries in the world. Between them, they manufacture and sell almost all of the world's weapons, and they possess the largest stockpile of weapons of mass destruction—chemical, biological and nuclear. They have fought the most wars, account for most of the genocide, subjection, ethnic cleansing and human rights violations in modern history, and have sponsored, armed and financed untold numbers of dictators and despots. Between them, they have worshiped, almost deified, the cult of violence and war. For all its appalling sins, the Taliban just isn't in the same league.

The Taliban was compounded in the crumbling crucible of rubble, heroin and land mines in the backwash of the Cold War. Its oldest leaders are in their early forties. Many of them are disfigured and handicapped, missing an eye, an arm or a leg. They grew up in a society scarred and devastated by war. Between the Soviet Union and America, over 20 years, about \$40 billion worth of arms and ammunition was poured into Afghanistan. The latest weaponry was the only shard of modernity to intrude upon a thoroughly medieval society.

Young boys—many of them orphans—who grew up in those times, had guns for toys, never knew the security and comfort of family life, never experienced the company of women. Now, as adults and rulers, they beat, stone, rape and brutalize women; they don't seem to know what else to do with them. Years of war have stripped them of gentleness, inured them to kindness and human compassion. They dance to the percussive rhythms of bombs raining down around them. Now they've turned their monstrosity on their own people.

More than a million Afghan people lost their lives in the 20 years of conflict that preceded this new war. Afghanistan was reduced to rubble, and now, the rubble is being pounded into finer dust. By the second day of the air strikes, U.S. pilots were returning to their bases without dropping their assigned payload of bombs. As one pilot put it, Afghanistan is "not a target-rich environment." At a press briefing at the Pentagon, Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld was asked if America had run out of targets. "For one thing, we're finding that some of the targets we hit need to be re-hit," he said. "Second, we're not running out of targets, Afghanistan is." This was greeted with gales of laughter in the Briefing Room.

On the ground in Afghanistan, the Northern Alliance—the Taliban's old enemy, and therefore the coalition's newest friend—is making headway in its push to capture Kabul. (Let it be noted that the Northern Alliance's track record is not very different from the Taliban's.) The visible, moderate, "acceptable" leader of the Alliance, Ahmed Shah Massoud, was killed in a suicide-bomb attack early in September. The rest of the Northern Alliance is a brittle confederation of brutal warlords, ex-communists and unbending clerics. It is a disparate group divided along ethnic lines, some of whom have tasted power in Afghanistan in the past.



TYLER HICKS/GETTY IMAGES

The bombing of Afghanistan is yet another act of terror against the people of the world.

Among the global powers, there is talk of "putting in a representative government." Or, on the other hand, of "restoring" the kingdom to 89-year-old Zahir Shah, who has lived in exile in Rome since 1973. That's the way the game goes—support Saddam Hussein, then "take him out," finance the *mujahedin*, then bomb them to smithereens; put in Zahir Shah and see if he's going to be a good boy. (Is it possible to "put in" a representative government? Can you place an order for democracy—with extra cheese and jalapeño peppers?)

Reports have begun to trickle in about civilian casualties, about cities emptying out as Afghan civilians flock to borders that have been closed. Main arterial roads have been blown up or sealed off. Those who have experience working in Afghanistan say that by early November, food convoys will not be able to reach the millions of Afghans (7.5 million according to the United Nations) who run the very real risk of starving to death during the course of this winter. They say that in the days that are left before winter sets in, there can either be a war, or an attempt to reach food to the hungry. Not both.

As a gesture of humanitarian support, the U.S. government air-dropped 37,500 packets of emergency rations into Afghanistan. It says it plans to drop a total of 500,000 packets. That will still add up to only a single meal for half a million people out of the several million in dire need of food. Aid workers have condemned it as a cynical, dangerous, public-relations exercise. They say that air-dropping food packets is worse than futile. First, because the food will never get to those who really need it. More dangerously, those who run out to retrieve the packets risk being blown up by land mines. A tragic alms race.

Nevertheless, the food packets had a photo-op all to themselves. Their contents were listed in major newspapers. They were vegetarian, we are told, as per Muslim dietary law. Each

yellow packet, decorated with the American flag, contained: rice, peanut butter, bean salad, strawberry jam, crackers, raisins, flat bread, an apple fruit bar, seasoning, matches, a spoon, a towlette, a napkin and illustrated user instructions.

After three years of unrelenting drought, an air-dropped airline meal in Jalalabad! The level of cultural ineptitude, the failure to understand what months of relentless hunger and grinding poverty *really* mean, the U.S. government's attempt to use even this abject misery to boost its self-image, beggars description.

Put your ear to the ground in this part of the world, and you can hear the thrumming, the deadly drumbeat of burgeoning anger. Please. Please, stop the war now. Enough people have died. The smart missiles are just not smart enough. They're blowing up whole warehouses of suppressed fury.

With all due respect to President Bush, the people of the world do not have to choose between the Taliban and the U.S. government. All the beauty of human civilization—our art, our music, our literature—lies beyond these two fundamentalist, ideological poles. There is as little chance that the people of the world can all become middle-class consumers as there is that they will all embrace any one particular religion. The issue is not about Good vs. Evil or Islam vs. Christianity as much as it is about *space*. About how to accommodate diversity, how to contain the impulse toward hegemony—economic, military, linguistic, religious, cultural and otherwise. Any ecologist will tell you how dangerous and fragile a monoculture is. A hegemonic world is like having a government without a healthy opposition. It becomes a kind of dictatorship. It's like putting a plastic bag over the world to prevent it from breathing. Eventually, it will be torn open.

It is important for governments and politicians to understand that manipulating these huge, raging human feelings for their own narrow purposes may yield instant results, but eventually and inexorably will have disastrous consequences. Igniting and exploiting religious sentiments for reasons of political expediency is the most dangerous legacy that governments or politicians can bequeath to *any* people—including their own. People who live in societies ravaged by religious or communal bigotry know that every religious text—from the Bible to the Bhagavad Gita—can be mined and misinterpreted to justify anything, from nuclear war to genocide to corporate globalization.

This is not to suggest that the terrorists who perpetrated the outrage on September 11 should not be hunted down and brought to book. They must be. But is war the best way to track them down? Will burning the haystack find you the needle? Or will it escalate the anger and make the world a living hell for all of us?

At the end of the day, how many people can you spy on, how many bank accounts can you freeze, how many conversations can you eavesdrop on, how many e-mails can you intercept, how many letters can you open, how many phones can you tap? Even before September 11, the CIA had accumulated more information than is humanly possible to process. (Sometimes, too much data can actually hinder intelligence—small wonder the U.S. spy satellites completely missed the preparation that preceded India's nuclear tests in 1998.) The sheer scale of the surveillance will become a logistical, ethical and civil rights nightmare. And freedom—that precious, precious thing—will be the first casualty. It's already hurt and hemorrhaging dangerously.

Every day that the war goes on, raging emotions are being let loose into the world. The international press has little or no independent access to the war zone. In any case, mainstream media, particularly in the United States, have more or less rolled over, allowing themselves to be tickled on the stomach with handouts from military men and government officials. Afghan radio stations have been destroyed by the bombing. The Taliban has always been deeply suspicious of the press. In the propaganda war, there is no accurate estimate of how many people have been killed, or how much destruction has taken place. In the absence of reliable information, wild rumors spread.

Bush recently boasted: "When I take action, I'm not going to fire a \$2 million missile at a \$10 empty tent and hit a camel in the butt. It's going to be decisive." He should know that there are no targets in Afghanistan that will give his missiles their money's worth. Perhaps, if only to balance his books, he should develop some cheaper missiles to use on cheaper targets and cheaper lives in the poor countries of the world. But then, that may not make good business sense to the coalition's weapons manufacturers.

Then there's that other branch of traditional coalition business—oil. Turkmenistan, which borders the northwest of Afghanistan, holds the world's fifth largest gas reserves and billions of barrels of oil reserves. Enough, experts say, to meet American energy needs for the next 30 years (or a developing country's energy requirements for a couple of centuries). America has always viewed oil as a security consideration, and protected it by any means it deems necessary. Few of us doubt that the U.S. military presence in the Persian Gulf has little to do with its concern for human rights and almost entirely to do with its strategic interest in oil.

For some years now, Unocal has been negotiating with the Taliban for permission to construct an oil pipeline through Afghanistan to Pakistan and out to the Arabian Sea. From here, Unocal hopes to access the lucrative "emerging markets" in South and Southeast Asia. In November 1997, a delegation of Taliban mullahs traveled to America and even met with State Department officials in Washington and later with Unocal executives in Houston. At that time, the Taliban's taste for public executions and its treatment of Afghan women were not made out to be the crimes against humanity that they are now. Over the next six months, pressure from hundreds of outraged American feminist groups was brought to bear on the Clinton administration. Fortunately, they managed to scuttle the deal. But now comes the U.S. oil industry's big chance.

In America, the arms industry, the oil industry and the major media networks—indeed, U.S. foreign policy—are all controlled by the same business combines. It would be foolish to expect this talk of guns and oil and defense deals to get any real play in the media. In any case, to a distraught, confused people whose pride has just been wounded, whose loved ones have been tragically killed, whose anger is fresh and sharp, the inanities about the "Clash of Civilizations" and the "Good vs. Evil" discourse home in unerringly. They are cynically doled out by government spokesmen like a daily dose of vitamins or anti-depressants. Regular medication ensures that mainland America continues to remain the enigma it has always been—a curiously insular people administered by a pathologically meddling, promiscuous government.

And what of the rest of us, the numb recipients of this onslaught of what we know to be preposterous propaganda? The daily consumers of the lies and brutality smeared in peanut butter and strawberry jam being air-dropped into our minds just like those yellow food packets. Shall we look away and eat because we're hungry, or shall we stare unblinking at the grim theater unfolding in Afghanistan until we retch collectively and say, in one voice, that we have had enough?

As the first year of the new millennium rushes to a close, one wonders—have we forfeited our right to dream? Will we ever be able to reimagine beauty without thinking of the World Trade Center and Afghanistan? ■

Arundhati Roy is the author of *The God of Small Things*, for which she received the Booker Prize, and *The Cost of Living*. Her latest book of essays, *Power Politics*, has just been published by South End Press.

The Road Ahead

It's only going to get worse

By Doug Ireland

The political mood in the country has never been more belligerent. Public opinion polls taken even before the full force of anthrax hysteria engulfed the country showed that four-fifths support not only the use of ground troops in Afghanistan, but also military action against other countries in the Middle East—and three-quarters of Americans favor military action against countries *outside* the Middle East.

These numbers free the Bush administration from any political constraints on widening the war beyond Afghanistan. The “zero casualties” mentality that governed our military brass for the past two decades went up in smoke when the hijacked plane exploded in the Pentagon. It has now evaporated in the country as well. In the wake of the bioterrorism scare, fear and frustration will drive even higher the public frenzy to lash out with bombs and bullets at someone—anyone.

The escalation strategy is now clear, particularly after Dubya's October 11 prime-time press conference: We will expand military strikes against other countries *ad seriatim*. There is no question that Iraq is next on the list. The new chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Richard Myers, let slip on *Meet the Press* that we are selecting targets in Iraq. And when Dubya went out of his way to publicly praise Paul Wolfowitz, the Pentagon's No. 2 and its most fervent hawk on Iraq, his goal became obvious.

The administration is already leaking selected “intelligence” designed to soften up the American people for a new war in Iraq—we are being told of meetings between the hijacker's leader, Mohammed Atta, and Iraqi secret service officers in Czechoslovakia, and of the British-educated Iraqi scientist Rihab Tabar (nicknamed “Dr. Germ”) as the mastermind



Pakistan's Pervez Musharraf faces enormous difficulty keeping a lid on the growing opposition at home.

behind the anthrax attacks (even though the former head of Russia's chemical and biological warfare program—Ken Abilek, now a U.S.-based consultant—told Ted Koppel on *Nightline* that he is convinced al-Qaeda purchased the anthrax and other toxins and technology from Russian scientists left impoverished when their huge chemical and biological weapons establishment of 30,000 technicians was dismantled). But the sanguineous despot Saddam Hussein is easy to hate, and it will take very little to convince Americans that he must be the next target in the long war.

We are plunging down that bloody road with no debate in Congress. Indeed, major figures in both parties—like Joe Lieberman and John McCain—are already voicing their support for hitting Iraq. And this even though the Gulf War demonstrated that Saddam cannot be toppled by air power alone—it will require investing the entire country with a huge army of occupation to end the Ba'ath regime's sorry history. The use of tactical nuclear weapons in Afghanistan is already being called for by congressional Republicans—not just hard-right ignoramuses like Arizona Sen. Jon Kyl, but also moderate Long Island Rep. Peter King and influential Indiana Rep. Steve Buyer. When an invasion of Iraq confronts our finger-in-the-wind elected representatives with the prospect of thousands of their constituents coming home in body bags, the cry of “nuke Saddam” will be widespread.

However, Bush will not move with full force against Iraq until the Taliban falls. And those in the punditocracy like the *Wall Street Journal*'s Al Hunt—who predicted on CNN that the Taliban will collapse “within a week”—are dreaming.

The air campaign to pave the way for the minority Northern Alliance's entrance into Kabul is only stiffening the resistance among Southern Afghanistan's Pashtun majority, for the fratricidal history of Afghan civil war makes the prospect of ethnic cleansing in the event of an Alliance victory very real.

International politics is rather like chess; one has to be able to think eight to ten moves ahead. That's something American presidents of the past 50 years have not been very good at—they cannot see farther than the next election. Bush is no chess player, and the madness of militarizing the campaign against terrorism becomes clearer every day, for war has its own momentum—once set in motion, the machine operates on its own inexorable logic, divorced from rational political goals.

U.S. military action in Afghanistan is already outpacing Bush's murky political objectives. American efforts to put together a coalition government under the aegis of the octogenarian King Zahir have stalled amid the squabbling of the heroin-dealing warlords who are our purchased allies. Pakistan, of course, detests the Northern Alliance, and neither has it forgotten that the king tried to annex part of Pakistan in the '60s.

President Pervez Musharraf will face enormous difficulty in keeping the lid on growing opposition in Pakistan if a hastily cobbled-together regime considered hostile to Pakistani interests takes symbolic power in Kabul. Musharraf's limited purge of his military and intelligence chiefs is an admission of weakness, not a demonstration of strength: More than a quarter of Pakistan's military are Pashtun, and, in addition to the ethnic and religious sympathies that bind much of the officer corps and most of the Pakistani intelligence service to the Taliban, the corruption of the Pakistani military by heroin-trafficking links them economically to the Taliban-supporting local Afghan chieftains as well.

In this context, the American bombing has created what the BBC has rightly characterized as a "humanitarian, political and security crisis" on the Afghan-Pakistani border, where tens of thousands of hunger-mad Afghan refugees are massing. The BBC and others have filmed the Taliban rounding up the men, separating them from the women and children, and stocking them in barbed-wire camps for conscription or ethnic cleansing. But whether Pakistan continues to keep them out at gunpoint, or lets them enter (something that this country, which is \$140 billion in debt and already hosting some 4 million refugees, cannot afford to do), these refugees constitute a political powder keg whose existence further destabilizes Musharraf and increases his vulnerability to a coup. (If he goes, who controls Pakistan's nukes?)

Add to this volatile mix the mounting civilian casualties from American bombing (including the destruction of a hospital, confirmed by U.N. observers) and one wonders how long Musharraf can hold on—particularly with India using the war as cover to step up its military activity in Kashmir, thus inflaming both the Pakistani military and the masses in the street. Moreover, Seymour Hersh's fine reporting in *The New Yorker* has underscored just how fragile is the sclerotic Saudi princes' hold on their country. No wonder both Pakistan and the Saudis are pleading for Bush to stop the bombing. If the

terrorists think the air campaign in Afghanistan has made the endlessly corrupt Saud family ripe for overthrow, they could strike the highly vulnerable Saudi oil fields, ending the cash flow that allows the 6,000 princes to stay in power (an eventuality which would drive oil to \$100 a barrel and send the world economy plummeting rapidly into a Depression).

Yet these gaping flaws in Bush's war policy are not being challenged by congressional Democrats, whose leaders—Tom Daschle and Dick Gephardt—still harbor illusions that they are viable presidential candidates, and so are loath to challenge on any front the conduct of a popular war. Now, in the wake of the anthrax scare that sent the cowardly House skedaddling, the Bushies are floating a proposal to let the president

govern by decree for at least 30 days without any congressional approval or restraint if he decides a "national emergency" warrants it. The power of the purse is Congress' only real rein on a president, and abandoning it even tem-

porarily would blow a major hole in our constitutional system of checks and balances that could not easily be repaired.

If you think the country wouldn't sit still for such a measure, think again. Just look at the exaggerated anthrax scare—after all, as Dr. Ezekiel Emanuel pointed out on the *Wall Street Journal's* op-ed page, "280 people would have to die of anthrax to equal the risk of driving 50 miles in a car (about one in a million)." Yet Americans are gorging themselves on overpriced Cipro (10 bottles cost \$2,100 in New York but only \$160 in Mexico), thus leaving the pill-poppers prey to lethal, antibiotic-resistant strains of influenza and other diseases; buying useless gas masks (ineffective without full body suits); and flooding emergency rooms with demands for anthrax tests at the first runny nose.

State and local health systems, the first line of defense against bioterrorism, are already teetering on the edge of collapse, their overworked personnel exhausted to the point of limited competence. If the public has become so deranged at what is, at the moment, a very limited danger, imagine what happens when our citizenry finds out that our country is completely unprepared for the kind of massive deaths the spread of plague or Ebola-type viruses, all airborne, could engender.

The likelihood of Bush being granted sweeping powers will measurably increase when Republicans almost certainly retake both houses of Congress next year during a deepening war with more U.S. casualties. Meanwhile, the rush to shred our civil liberties is unimpeded. The House rejected the compromise anti-terrorism bill that Rep. John Conyers and others managed to engineer in the Judiciary Committee, and substituted for it the much more draconian Senate version, which Tom Daschle helped whip through the Senate with only one dissenting vote—Russ Feingold of Wisconsin. (In the House, only 75 Democrats stood up to oppose the unadulterated Ashcroft package.)

At this point, it is hard to see a way out of the crisis the long war is creating for our democracy. One is reminded of the old Russian proverb: An optimist is only a pessimist who has not yet heard the bad news. ■

Once set in motion, the war machine operates on its own inexorable logic.

The Metaphysical Club

U.N. diplomats give Bush a blank check

By Ian Williams

UNITED NATIONS

Wars can have collateral benefits as well as casualties. Following the attacks of September 11, any administration would be under heavy pressure to do something. And as Bill Clinton frequently showed, the easiest domestic fix is to send in the bombers. But bombing, as Clinton also showed, can become a reflex that does not need the time for political and military calculations required by risky ground operations. Hence the wrong targets he chose, and the wrong tactics he so often displayed.

In the days after the World Trade Center atrocity, there were real grounds for fear that Teheran, Baghdad and Khartoum would join Kabul as targets. (I even had tremors for Moscow, Managua and Havana, since the old cold warriors steeped in historical grudges like Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz seem to have difficulty relating to current reality.) In those precarious days, the U.N. Security Council, meeting amidst the smell of the smoldering World Trade Center, passed resolution 1368—effectively giving the Bush administration a blank check. It declared that the United States was acting under the U.N. Charter's provisions for self-defense—thereby implying that the Bush administration did not need a specific Security Council resolution to legitimize its military operations.

A week later, the United States sought and got an even bigger blank check before beginning military operations. Resolution 1373—which reiterated the previous resolution, invoked Chapter Seven of the U.N. charter authorizing military action, and added a whole wish list of anti-terrorist actions states should undertake—was approved unanimously, with even China and Russia going along. Some of this may well have been because no one wants to annoy America in its present state of belligerence. But there was satisfaction that the United States had returned to the United Nations to validate its operation (and agreed to pay \$582 million owed in back dues), which sent reassuring signals that Colin Powell and the State Department had won the upper hand in Washington.

The United States cannot wage an effective unilateral war, thus a U.N. endorsement has been an integral part of winning over a multilateral coalition. Even the beginning of ground operations may indicate that the planners have learned a lesson from Kosovo: Prolonged bombing increases the risk of accidents and erodes multinational support for the war. Similarly, while Operation Snowdrop—the “humanitarian”

component of the U.S. campaign—may indeed be cosmetic, it shows that the administration is aware that it must minimize civilian suffering if it hopes to keep wavering partners in line.

Most reassuring for U.N. diplomats is that, despite initial skepticism, the administration welcomed Kofi Annan's appointment of respected Algerian diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi as special envoy for Afghanistan. He has channels open to all parties, including the Taliban, Iranians and others with whom the United States does not want direct contact.

However, the Americans' renewed interest in a U.N. role is ominous as well as heartening. It would not be the first time that the United Nations has been set up for failure in impossible situations. Somalia and Bosnia spring to mind.

Brahimi is candid, and shares the opinion of many senior U.N. officials and diplomats. There are no foreseeable good outcomes, he told *In These Times*, so the struggle is for the least bad ones.

He declared categorically that the United Nations did not seek “nation-building” and peace-keeping roles in Afghanistan. Indeed, he invoked his own report on peace-keeping operations which, succinctly put, concluded that the organization should not bite off more than it could chew. “I think the United Nations will welcome the possibility of helping the Afghan people reconstruct their country,” Brahimi says, “And we will definitely be doing as much as we can. But that is a different thing from actually providing direct administration for the country.”

When I suggested that whether or not the organization sought so substantial a role, it could find the role thrust upon it, Brahimi made it plain that they would fight it to the end. But the United Nations will surely have such a role in any postwar settlement, precisely because its neutrality and its attempts to maintain a presence in Kabul throughout the darkest times



U.N. envoy Lakhdar Brahimi says he will fight any nation building.

STR/REUTERS

make it the only organization that could work with all the mistrustful factions. In doing so, however, it risks becoming the scapegoat for the probable failure of the international community to provide sufficient money for reconstruction. Whatever emerges in the mountains of Afghanistan will be no Shangri La.

Shortly after the bombs began to fall on Afghanistan, Kofi Annan won the Nobel Peace Prize. It was clearly more for aspiration than achievement, which is not to lessen its significance. (Henry Kissinger, for example, could claim neither.) Still, the prize provided a timely boost to the organization and its secretary-general.

Many on the left have metaphysical illusions about the United Nations. Many who opposed the Gulf War, which was mandated by the Security Council, went on to decry the war over Kosovo because the United States did not seek a specific resolution to support it. They tended to overlook the several hundred U.N. resolutions and statements about Slobodan Milosevic's regime, and some now question the legality of the international tribunal that is trying him.

In the case of Afghanistan, the Taliban, which does not hold a seat in the General Assembly, was already under U.N. Security Council sanctions for its failure to hand over Osama bin Laden. The two post-September 11 resolutions certainly make the U.S. military operations legal, so long as they are conducted by the laws of war as established by various international conventions.

The next line of anti-war attack is that the Security Council is a political body. Indeed it is, just like the Supreme Court

and Congress. Whether we like it or not, the World Court—in the case of Libya, for example—has ruled that Security Council decisions override all other forms of international law. This is not always palatable, but we can hardly call upon Israel, Indonesia or Morocco to obey resolutions, then ignore others that are inconvenient.

The United Nations is a deeply flawed body. As Winston Churchill said of democracy, it is the worst possible system—except for all the others. People may argue the justice of the war, they may even argue its sanity, but its legality is fairly well assured. Ironically, that makes it a neat negative image of the war over Kosovo, which several jurists deemed possibly illegal but definitely just.

The traditional, binary “Oppose Any War” platform also denies very real political possibilities in the mainstream of American politics. Ambrose Bierce said that war was God's way of teaching Americans geography. Now is a good time to build a bridgehead for multilateralism. Foreign affairs are no longer alien to Americans. Isolationism is no longer an option. Suddenly we have cogent reasons for Americans to support multinational and multilateral initiatives.

Clearly much of Washington's present support for the United Nations is expedient. But played adroitly, newly taught geography graduates there and elsewhere could make it downright unpatriotic to oppose paying U.N. dues, supporting the International Criminal Court or even signing the Kyoto accords. ■

Ian Williams is author of The U.N. for Beginners.

Next Stop, Southeast Asia?

The United States may have a new target in its war on terrorism

By Joshua Schenker

BANGKOK

As the U.S. military moves into a ground offensive in Afghanistan and diplomats scramble to create a post-Taliban regime, a second front in the global war on terrorism is developing in a region that has largely avoided the spotlight: Southeast Asia.

That Southeast Asia has become a hub for Islamic militants is no secret to intelligence organizations. Last year, a secret military document compiled by Philippine intelligence and leaked to the media linked Abu Sayyaf, a Muslim terrorist organization in the southern Philippines, with groups such as al-Qaeda. By working with foreign extremists, the document said, Abu Sayyaf receives “training, logistics, expertise and access to the international terrorist network.” According to Philippine military sources, Abu Sayyaf members have studied in al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan. Indeed, the Philippine military believes bin Laden is a primary financial backer of Abu Sayyaf, which has vowed to kill all Americans in the Philippines and has been accused of plotting to assassinate the pope.

Malaysian police believe bin Laden has developed links with

Kumpulan Mujahideen Malaysia, a group of Malaysian Islamic militants who have received training in Kabul. Lakser Mujahideen, an organization that split off from Kumpulan, has been active in eastern Indonesia, allegedly bombing churches and “cleansing” Indonesia's Maluku Islands of Christians. Indeed, Islamic militants maintain a desk at the major airport in the Malukus that they use to register foreign *mujahedin* fighters who have come to terrorize local Christians.

What's more, Southeast Asian leaders worry that Islamic militants based in Indonesia, Thailand, the Philippines and Malaysia give foreign terrorists sanctuary, financial assistance and other aid. Ramzi Yousef, who organized the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993, plotted his terrorist acts in the Philippines, where he lived for several years before fleeing in 1995 to Bangkok and then Islamabad. Osama bin Laden's brother-in-law, Mohammad Jamal Khalifa, resided in the Philippines in the mid-'90s. In the Philippines, Khalifa opened bank accounts for a charitable organization that were used to channel money to groups linked to al-Qaeda and to establish Islamic religious

schools in Southeast Asia. And Thai officials suspect al-Qaeda has used Bangkok's sophisticated financial institutions to funnel money.

The terrorist threat has only increased in Southeast Asia over the past year. "This year Abu Sayyaf has become well entrenched in the southern Philippines," says Carlyle Thayer, a Honolulu-based Asia expert. According to defense analysts, Abu Sayyaf has grown in number from fewer than 100 members two years ago to at least 500 fighters today. The more than 350 small, lawless, Muslim-majority islands in the southern Philippines are geographically isolated and difficult to police. Abu Sayyaf made so much money last year from kidnapping ransoms that it now possesses more financial assets than the Philippine armed forces. According to one counterterrorism researcher who used to work for a foreign intelligence service, "the southern part of the Philippines might become an alternative [major hub for al-Qaeda]" if bin Laden's organization is driven out of Afghanistan.

Southeast Asian terrorists, who used to focus primarily on local targets, have also zeroed in on Americans and American structures. Over the past year, Abu Sayyaf has kidnapped more than 25 foreigners and beheaded several of these captives; Abu Sayyaf still holds two Americans hostages. Philippine immigration authorities say four of the September 11 hijackers may have passed through the Philippines several times since 1999, and two of them met a possible accomplice in Kuala Lumpur last year. Meanwhile, Philippine police suspect that three men carrying Omani passports who were questioned after the September 11 attacks for filming the U.S. Embassy in Manila may have been plotting to bomb the facility. After the men were released from police custody, they fled the country; several days later, investigators found traces of explosives in the Manila hotel room the three men had rented.

Since September 11, the United States has raised its counterintelligence profile in Southeast Asia. America's ambassador to the United Nations has told the Security Council that the United States may take "further actions with respect to other organizations and other states" linked to terror. American officials have said that militant Islamic groups in the Philippines are among Washington's top counterterrorism targets, and a recent Defense Department review called for moving American military assets from Europe to Asia.

Many Southeast Asian leaders have welcomed the Pentagon's advances. Philippine President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo has offered the United States use of two military installations in the Philippines for the war on terror, and the United States is sending a contingent of military advisers to the Philippines to help local troops combat Abu Sayyaf. Perhaps most surprising, China, which only five months ago was squabbling with Washington over downed planes, is considering allowing the FBI to establish a Beijing office.

Other countries in the region also are seizing on the global war on terror as an opportunity to move against Islamic militants. In mid-October, Indonesian police, previously unwilling to arrest militant groups, jailed 12 members of the Islamic Defenders Front, an organization that had threatened to conduct "sweeps" of Americans across the Indonesian archipelago. At the same time, Indonesian financial authorities announced they would

step up efforts to freeze the assets of terrorist groups.

Ultimately, the United States probably will employ several counterterrorism strategies in Southeast Asia. One former diplomat who had been based in Southeast Asia predicts Washington will apply pressure on governments in Jakarta, Manila and Bangkok to examine Islamic charities more closely and round up more militants suspected of any links to terror. Since September 11, Philippine police already have begun rounding up Middle Eastern migrants living in one section of Manila believed to house



A man stands guard near the coffins of the 10 hostages beheaded by Abu Sayyaf rebels in the southern Philippines.

several terrorist cells. Washington also will push the Southeast Asian nations to develop a joint anti-terrorism initiative that would include combined police efforts and more sharing of counterterrorism intelligence, experts say.

Over the coming months Washington probably will also press Southeast Asian leaders to tone down their anti-American rhetoric and focus on development in impoverished areas—areas such as the southern Philippines that are breeding grounds for militancy, since their only institutions are paid for by charities linked to Islamic radicals.

Some analysts, however, are less optimistic about the chances for combating terror in Southeast Asia without committing gross human rights abuses or adding to the pool of radical Islamists. In Indonesia, "the armed forces have purposely prolonged conflict with militant groups in order to retain the army's influence over the country, in the process committing many abuses," says Dwight King, an Indonesia specialist at Northern Illinois University. Given that thousands of Muslim radicals have held anti-American rallies since the United States began bombing Afghanistan, King worries that abuses by the Indonesian military could push moderate Muslims into the fundamentalists' camp.

In addition, unless the United States plans to send a large number of troops into the southern Philippines and other hotspots—an unlikely proposition—Washington will have to combat terror by working with Southeast Asian authorities, which have been unreliable in the past.

What's more, argues Bambang Harymurti, editor of *Tempo*, a respected Indonesian magazine, the Indonesian financial authorities haven't even been able to catch Tommy Suharto, playboy son of the former dictator. Tommy Suharto, who is wanted on a variety of charges, "is a famous face, and pops up around Jakarta, and still they can't catch him," Bambang says. "How will they find guys linked to bin Laden?" ■

First, Do No Harm

Nation building vs. globalization

By David Moberg

In his campaign for president, George W. Bush scoffed at the Clinton administration's efforts at "nation building" and ostensibly bringing democracy to such war-torn lands as Somalia and Kosovo. But in the weeks after the September 11 attacks, the Bush administration gingerly began to argue that the United States should support efforts to replace the Taliban movement in Afghanistan with a friendlier, more stable government—a diffident turn to nation building.

In the conventional wisdom, the nation-state—an idea only a little more than two centuries old—was supposed to be withering away, replaced by a new global order of free markets and multinational corporations. But September 11 has bolstered national sentiments in the United States and may provoke a temporary retreat from globalization, simply because of security costs and concerns. It also has been a stark reminder that, at least for the foreseeable future, well-functioning nation-states are still essential for the welfare of both their own citizens and the international community. No other country has taken privatization of government quite as far as the Afghans, with classically Hobbesian results—lives there are nasty, brutish and short.

While Afghanistan's own distinct history partly explains the chaos, U.S. policies over the past two decades have contributed greatly to the collapse. The pressures of globalization also have weakened nations around the world—with worrisome consequences not only in Afghanistan, but in its precarious, nuclear-armed neighbor, Pakistan.

The debate over whether or how outside powers should try to build nations cuts across political lines. Some conservatives have argued in the editorial pages of the *Wall Street Journal* and the *Financial Times* for a revival of colonialism, or at least the equivalent of League of Nations mandates to govern troublesome countries. Other conservatives object to any intervention: In a recent book, three writers from the Cato Institute, a bastion of free-market fundamentalism, denounce nation building as a "fool's errand" (while other right-wingers call it "liberal imperialism"). On the left, there's also division about whether intervention by the United Nations or the United States can promote human rights and democracy, or whether it's inevitably tainted as self-interested imperialism.

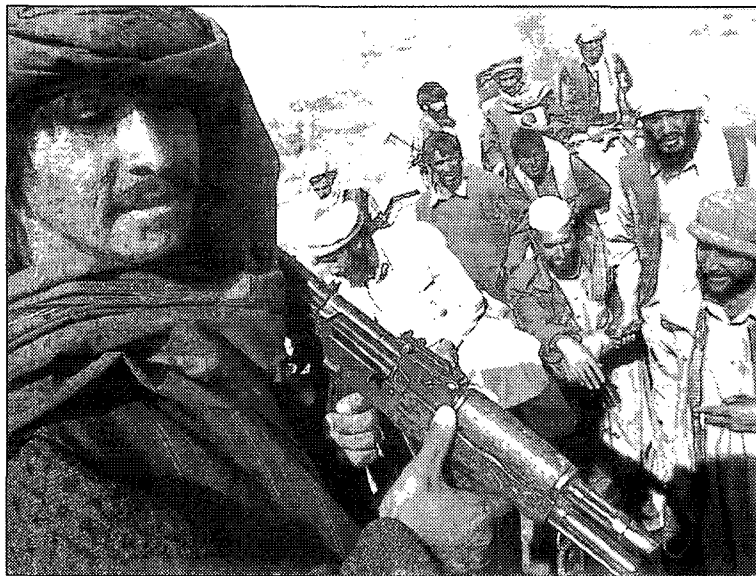
Although Bush still insists that it's up to the Afghans to forge their own future, and the U.N. envoy to Afghanistan denies that the United Nations is interested in nation building there, the United States has encouraged a flurry of meetings from Rome to Peshawar, Pakistan among former Afghan leaders who hope to create a government to take power after the Taliban. The United Nations is circulating a proposal for a one-year interim administration under its supervision with rotating figurehead presidencies, according to the *Financial Times*. The administration would call a council of tribal, religious and political leaders, then possibly hold elections.

There is widespread agreement that the Northern Alliance, or United Front, is not a viable alternative to the Taliban. It represents ethnic minorities in the north with none of the south's Pashtun majority, and its record of mistreating civilians during a chaotic administration of the country was nearly as bad as that of the Taliban. While few Afghans remember exiled King Zahir, he is presented as a useful figurehead and symbol of more peaceful times (though both the United States and Pakistan strongly opposed his return shortly after the Soviet invasion, according to journalist Ahmed Rashid).

Should any of the figures inside and outside the country could agree on a government, perhaps through the traditional assembly, the *loya jirga*, then presumably it might benefit from foreign financial support and business investment if, as Brookings Institution foreign policy fellow and former Reagan State Department official Stephen P. Cohen says, it agrees to keep out terrorist groups and restrict poppy cultivation.

But Barnett Rubin, a senior fellow of the Center on International Cooperation at New York University, and several other experts on Afghan politics argued

in a paper last June that it would be impossible to proceed in this manner for several reasons. First, the Afghan conflict is not just a civil war, but a transnational one involving a multitude of outside forces supplying and manipulating various Afghan factions. The warring factions inside have no reason to relinquish power to the leaders outside the country or to take part in a new government, since the state does not exist.



These Northern Alliance soldiers are not a viable alternative to the Taliban.

Drug trafficking and smuggling have destabilized Afghanistan, Pakistan and surrounding states, but there are virtually no opportunities for most young men other than war, which at least provides a meal a day to a continuing supply of cheap fighters. Rubin argued that the United Nations, World Bank and other international actors would have to begin the process of reconstructing the country, especially providing education to what has become one of the most illiterate populations in the world, as an incentive for different groups to come together politically. The money for reconstruction must come first as a catalyst for political progress.

Jochen Hippler, a German political scientist at the Institute for Development and Peace at the University of Duisberg, is skeptical. "Afghanistan has been destroyed for 20 years by meddling from the outside," he says. "The only long-term solution is cutting off outside meddling."

Intervention won't work now, he argues, since the combatants are not likely to come together during a war; there is no political base in Afghanistan for most likely coalitions; and any outside peacekeeping force would just be a target for every Afghan faction. "In the long run a *loya jirga* would be one of the key elements that would work, but in the short run it is completely hopeless," he says. "You need a historic phase of reintegrating society."

On the other hand, Hippler argues, Pakistan is a desperately fragile state that does need help before it disintegrates. It needs debt relief, which was promised by Bush as payment for turning away from the Taliban, whom Pakistan has long supported. But it also needs land reform, infrastructure investment, collection of taxes from the wealthy, and resolution of the Kashmir conflict with India—which has led insecure Pakistan to waste huge sums on its military and to seek alliances with Islamic fundamentalists in Afghanistan and elsewhere. Making Pakistan more secure and prosperous would also help stabilize Afghanistan.

Talk of replacing the Taliban, in any case, may be premature. U.S. military officials have been surprised at the tenacity of Taliban resistance. *Wall Street Journal* reporter Steve Levine reported from Peshawar that the U.S. bombing was backfiring and solidifying support behind the Taliban among Afghan refugees and their leaders. Hippler argues that the bombing plays into the hands of bin Laden, who wants the poor masses and educated but frustrated and underemployed Muslims everywhere to see the world as bipolar, with him and his international Islamic fundamentalist movement as the opposition to the hegemonic United States.

David Gibbs, an associate professor of political science at the University of Arizona, agrees that outside meddling has destroyed Afghanistan and that the best strategy now may be to follow the medical prescription, "first, do no harm." It's advice that the United States should have followed long ago.

Carter administration National Security Adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski has admitted that the CIA began supporting

Islamic fundamentalist *mujahedin* groups in 1979 with the explicit intention of luring the Soviets into a Vietnam-style debacle in Afghanistan. Throughout the '80s the United States pumped as much as \$5 billion in support to *mujahedin* groups. Besides laying the groundwork for the Taliban and al-Qaeda, U.S. and Pakistani support for the *mujahedin* opened up the deeply destabilizing heroin trade. And when the Soviets pulled out in 1989, the United States did little to help with reconstruction, humanitarian relief or education aid, all of which might have provided an alternative to the Islamic fundamentalist *madrassas* in Pakistan and Afghanistan that provided militant young troops for the Taliban.

The United States also has helped to weaken governments for the past several decades through its globalization policies and through institutions like the International

Monetary Fund. Governments in poor countries have been pressured to cut budgets, increase school and health fees for the poor, privatize government services, and act as collection agencies for international debts that they cannot and should not have to pay.

Besides weakening the state, the globalization agenda pushed by the United States has undermined the positive side of nationalism. Nations are a way of integrating people, geographically and also across classes, which gives poor people a voice and a measure of equality. But, as a new report from the Economic Policy Institute concludes, two decades of global integration through deregulated trade and capital flows has contributed "to rising inequality and impeded progress in poverty reduction." Continued high levels of poverty and rising inequality—among nations and within nations—contribute to a disintegration of nations and destabilization of the international community.

Under those conditions, it is easier for an Osama bin Laden to flourish and harder to find any solution for countries like Afghanistan. The first step toward nation building, then, would be for the United States to stop doing all the things that undo nations, undermine governments and increase inequality. ■

Besides weakening the state, the U.S. globalization agenda has undermined the positive side of nationalism.

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Bioterror, Then and Now

Anthrax is bad, but smallpox is worse—much worse

By Ned Stuckey-French



The last known case of smallpox occurred in 1978. Virtually no one has been vaccinated in the United States since 1972.

300 million people died of smallpox in the 20th century alone. Even with modern medical care, smallpox kills about a third of the unvaccinated people it strikes. There are no mild cases. Survivors are left scarred, and sometimes blind or with deformed bones. But one of the great victories of 20th century science was the eradication of smallpox. The last known case occurred in 1978. The hitch is that once the disease was wiped out, routine vaccinations stopped. Virtually no one has been vaccinated in the United States since 1972, and most of us who were vaccinated back in the '60s could now contract the disease because immunity does not persist permanently. It's estimated that only 10 to 15 percent of the U.S. population has residual immunity. In June 1999, experts meeting at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta unanimously

agreed that, followed by anthrax, smallpox was the greatest bioterrorist threat to the United States.

It is some comfort that Secretary Tommy Thompson recently named Dr. D.A. Henderson to chair the Health and Human Services advisory council on bioterrorism. Henderson is the Johns Hopkins researcher who led the World Health Organization's successful campaign to eradicate smallpox, and no one understands smallpox better than he does. For many years, he has been writing about the real and immediate dangers posed by bioterrorism. He has argued for the stockpiling of drugs and vaccines, the training and mobilization of health workers, the education of the public, and the need to build an international consensus against the use of biological weapons. "We are ill-prepared to deal with a terrorist attack that employs biological weapons," Henderson declared in a 1998 article in the journal *Emerging Infectious Diseases*. "The specter of biological weapons use is an ugly one, every bit as grim and foreboding as that of a nuclear winter."

Regarding smallpox specifically, Henderson warned: "If some modest volume of virus were to be released (perhaps by exploding a light bulb containing virus in a Washington subway), the event would go unnoticed until the first cases with rash began to appear 9 or 10 days later." Because hardly any doctors have ever seen smallpox, and so few laboratories can test for it, several more days might go by before the first diagnosis was made. If only 100 people were originally infected, Henderson wrote, tens of thousands, including many unsuspecting hospital personnel, could have been exposed by the time the epidemic was identified. Hospital isolation wards and our national stores of vaccine would at that point be sorely tested.

I live in Tallahassee, Florida, not far from the state Supreme Court Building. During last year's election fiasco, it was surrounded by TV satellite hook-ups and reporters doing live broadcasts, and we in Tallahassee took to calling it "ground zero." I drove my two young daughters by so they could see a piece of history.

September 11 left us all with a new ground zero. But events were not done with Florida. Soon after the attacks in New York and Washington, the FBI established a Florida connection. With its flight schools and its anonymous, everybody's-from-somewhere-else apartment complexes, our state was found to be the staging area. And now, a few weeks later, Robert Stevens is dead, seven other people in Boca Raton have tested positive for anthrax, and we're all starting to realize that from now on ground zero might be anywhere. Everyone is skittish. Hourly, it seems, we have to decide again whether we're being cautious or alarmist. Should we fly or not? What do we say to our kids? What should we believe? What should we fear?

I fear smallpox. I'm not too keen on flying, and anthrax has everybody worried right now, but it's smallpox that really scares me.

Anthrax is awful, but smallpox is worse. Unlike anthrax, it's contagious, very contagious. "It spreads like wildfire," says Peter Katona, a consultant to Los Angeles on bioterrorism and assistant professor of medicine at UCLA. "There are cases where people were walking down the street a hundred yards away, outside a building, and they got it."

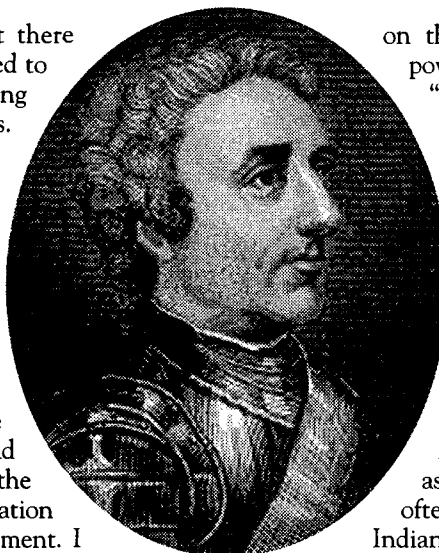
It's also deadly. Smallpox has killed more people than any other disease in history, including bubonic plague. At least

This scenario had me quaking, and yet there was a sentence in his article that seemed to contain an oversight that set me thinking down some new and troubling channels. Reminding us that his Washington subway scenario was still speculative, Henderson emphasized that neither smallpox, anthrax nor the plague “has so far effectively been deployed as a biological weapon, and thus no real world events exist to provide likely scenarios.”

First of all, I thought about the recent anthrax outbreaks and was somewhat comforted. The attacks, while deadly, so far have been pretty limited in scope. But then my mind turned again to smallpox, and I recalled the effects of smallpox on America’s native population during the first centuries of European settlement. I thought about Fort Pitt, Lord Jeffrey Amherst and the tribes of the Ohio River Valley.

In the early 1760s, immediately following the French and Indian War, Ottawa Chief Pontiac pulled together a coalition of tribes intent on driving the British from the Great Lakes region. Angered by the British refusal to distribute (as the French had) gun powder and ammunition for hunting, and by the British plan to seize Indian lands, Pontiac’s warriors began to attack British troops and settlers in the spring of 1763.

At about the same time, smallpox broke out among the soldiers and civilians inside Fort Pitt, the site of present-day Pittsburgh. During May and June, nine forts fell to the Indians, leaving only Fort Detroit and Fort Pitt in British hands. On June 24, a small delegation of Delaware Indians brought news of the British losses to Fort Pitt and advised Simeon Ecuyer, captain of the fort, to surrender. Having already been notified by a messenger from Fort Detroit that Col. Henry Bouquet was on his way with reinforcements, Ecuyer attempted to buy time by putting the Delaware off. He sent them away with “two Blankets and a Handkerchief out of the Small Pox Hospital.”



Lord Jeffrey Amherst

on this occasion use every stratagem in our power to reduce them.” We must, he wrote, “put a most Effectual Stop to their very being.” Amherst’s directives apparently arrived at Fort Pitt with Bouquet after the fact, but his paper trail and his rhetoric have linked him historically to this act of bioterrorism.

The European settlement of America offers a real-world scenario of what smallpox can do to an unprotected population. Measles, cholera, influenza, cannons and repeating rifles all played a role in the conquering of America, but none of them was more devastating than smallpox. Smallpox epidemics often killed as much as half of the affected Indian population. Sometimes it was worse. Epidemics, quite likely of smallpox, reduced the population of the Winnebago in Wisconsin from

about 20,000 to 600 between 1634 and 1670. A smallpox epidemic from 1781 to 1783 is said to have killed as many as 3,000 of the 5,000 Ojibwa south of Lake Superior. In the winter of 1837-1838, a steamboat passenger with smallpox took the disease up the Missouri River. The resulting epidemic killed about 17,000 Plains Indians.

Of course, these numbers only bolster Henderson’s arguments and should lead us all to demand a more effective defense against bioterrorism. As Henderson has said, we must improve our intelligence about who might possess the smallpox virus. Supposedly samples of it are stored only in the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta and a like facility in Russia. But that facility, in Novosibirsk, is no longer considered secure. Henderson says a colleague who visited in the autumn of 1997 found it half-empty and “protected by a handful of guards who had not been paid in months.” U.S. intelligence suspects that the Russians, North Koreans and Iraqis have hidden the virus for military use. Iran, Iraq, Pakistan and Osama bin Laden’s al-Qaeda network have all tried to obtain it.

Intelligence is important, Henderson says, but because prevention is so difficult and “detection or interdiction of those intending to use biological weapons is next to impossible,” medical workers in emergency rooms and “specialists in infectious diseases ... constitute the first line of defense.” These medical personnel need more training to help them diagnose smallpox, more beds and better staffing to treat the sick, more labs equipped to confirm their diagnoses and, especially, available vaccine to help contain an epidemic.

In 1972 a relatively mild outbreak in Yugoslavia prompted that country to seal its borders and vaccinate 20 million people. The United States has only about 15 million doses of smallpox vaccine on hand. Secretary Thompson is currently seeking funding to get 300 million new doses, but they wouldn’t be available before the end of next year at the earliest.

The implications of these numbers, and of Henderson’s warnings, are staggering, as is the history of the encounter between Europeans and Native Americans. And yet I am compelled to return to the Fort Pitt example and examine it from a political as well as a scientific standpoint. I believe we also need to look at Lord Jeffrey Amherst’s attitudes and his

We cannot deny that our own history includes bioterrorism and genocide.

His ruse apparently worked. For the next year, smallpox, resulting at least in part from these “gifts,” spread down the Ohio, devastating Mingo, Delaware, Wyandot and Shawnee villages. Eventually the epidemics traveled down the Mississippi, affecting Creek, Choctaw and Chickasaw Indians in what is now Mississippi and Alabama as well as some native people in the American Southwest.

Ecuyer and others at Fort Pitt apparently hatched the smallpox plan on their own, but the commander-in-chief of British forces in North America, Lord Jeffrey Amherst, certainly would have approved. He was corresponding with Bouquet at the same time, asking “Could it not be contrived to send the Small Pox among those disaffected tribes of Indians? We must

rhetoric if we are to learn all the lessons we should from Fort Pitt.

At first, we might be tempted to see Amherst only as a kind of 18th century Osama bin Laden (with Captain Ecuyer perhaps as his Mohammed Atta). Lord Jeffrey sat safely in New York, trying to avoid culpability while doing the strategic planning and ideological work of his holy war. "Total Extirpation," he said, "was scarce Attonement for the Bloody and Inhuman deeds" of the Indians. His language is dehumanizing, genocidal and lit with religious fervor. It is the language of a terrorist.

But Amherst was a British soldier, a white settler in America, and we cannot in good conscience completely separate ourselves from his words or Captain Ecuyer's deeds. U.S. troops, in fact, apparently emulated Fort Pitt's example by providing their own infected blankets to Plains Indians during the 19th century. We cannot deny that our history includes the bioterrorism and genocide these men practiced in the name of Manifest Destiny.

But some have tried. Amherst College, for instance, claims on its Web site that "it's the town of Amherst, not the college, that is named for the British general" and that "Amherst College was named in honor of the town." But until the 1970s, Amherst College's official china depicted a mounted Englishman with a sword chasing Indians on foot, and the school's fight song still opens with the lines: "Oh, Lord Jeffrey



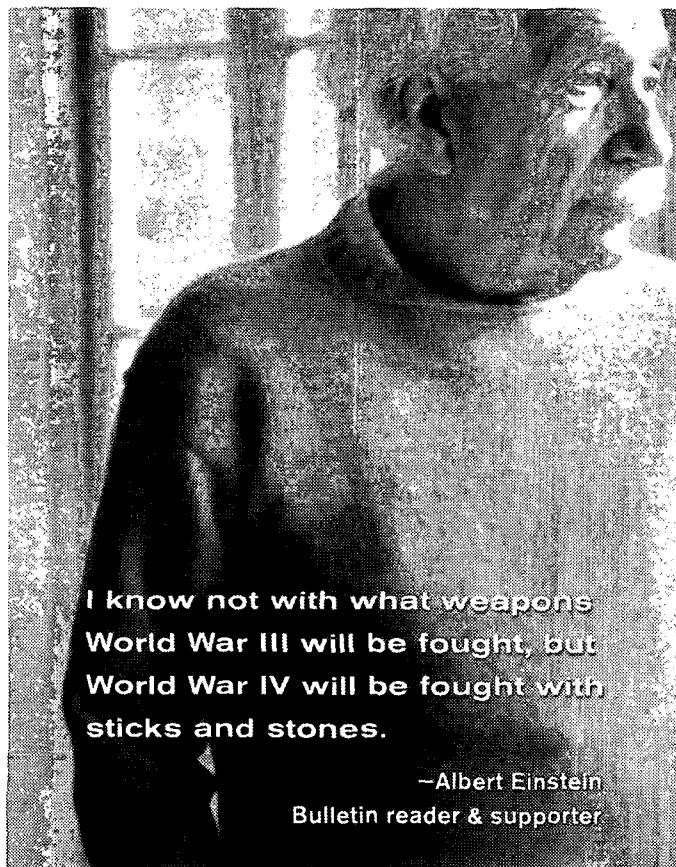
D.A. Henderson

Amherst was a soldier of the king / And he came from across the sea / To the Frenchmen and the Indians he didn't do a thing."

Lynne Cheney, wife of the vice president and former chairwoman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, said recently that in the present climate we must emphasize American history, not multiculturalism. "To say that it is more important now [to teach habits of tolerance, knowledge and awareness of other cultures]," she explained, "implies that the events of September 11 were our fault, that it was our failure to understand Islam that led to so many deaths and so much destruction."

This kind of thinking is exactly what leads us to read our own history selectively and blindly. It leads us to think we have all the answers, to believe that none of the complaints of a terrorist could ever be valid, to assert that we are protecting democracy and not oil when we prop up royal families and repressive regimes in the Middle East. And it leads us into our own distinctly American version of Lord Jeffrey's and bin Laden's dehumanizing rhetoric, a rhetoric that puts God on the side of the cowboys who will "smoke them out of their holes" and bring 'em back "dead or alive." ■

Ned Stuckey-French teaches in the English Department at Florida State University. He is working on a book about his 10 years as a trade union organizer in a Boston hospital.



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Love in the Shadows

By Hilary Russ

The scene is as vivid in my mind as it was two years ago, when I witnessed it for the first time: A man standing alone in an empty room begins to leak. Water drips, then pours, from the breast pocket of his suit jacket. Soon, the black-and-white man in his black-and-white world wades in a small blue ocean, while shouts and screams penetrate the watery room from a battle raging outside.

The man is one of three recurring characters inhabiting the animated films and drawings of South African artist William Kentridge. *Stereoscope*, the last in a series of eight shorts, is the one I saw first at the Museum of Modern Art in 1999. Since then, I've been waiting impatiently for this, his first American retrospective, recently on view at the New Museum in New York and now touring nationally.

The exhibition features all eight films of this 1989-1999 series—animated by the meticulous alteration of charcoal drawings—as well as new film installations, projections, videos of his puppet, theater and opera work, and more than 60 drawings, including early etchings and large figurative drawings. The show is at Chicago's Museum of Contemporary Art until January 20; Houston, Los Angeles and Cape Town are next.

The first work in the exhibit to confront the viewer is the projection piece *Shadow Procession*. It opens with a giant robed man climbing his way up into the picture as though over a ledge, heaving into the screen. His enormous, oversized hands gesture and circle madly in the air, like a call to arms or a rounding up of unseen people, while his bloated belly shivers and shakes. With his girth, suggestive of greed, wealth and power, he summons up a sad string of thin, flat people shuffling across the screen. Then the music changes, other figures enter and

exit the frame, and all the noise and light is reflected by the black floor—and by the rest of the gallery as well. Music from his other films sneaks around the walls of the museum, and soon we're in Kentridge's world, walking through the shadows and echoes and rapid transformations of his South Africa.

Though well-known in his country for more than 15 years, Kentridge didn't gain wider acclaim until he caught the attention of curators at a 1997 festival in Germany. Kentridge, whose Jewish family came to South Africa from Lithuania a century ago,

was born in 1955 in Johannesburg, where he still lives. He hails from a line of lawyers, including his father, who represented the families of apartheid victims in the '60s. In college, Kentridge concentrated on politics and African studies; he went on to study drawing, printmaking, mime and theater, all of which are visible in his work.

While his virtuosic control of charcoal, socio-political nuances and family background are all unique, especially in combination, so too is his technique for filmmaking. "Additive animation," as he calls it, is different from the usual process, which uses a separate animated picture for each frame of film. Kentridge starts with one drawing, which he alters again and again on successive trips between camera and canvas, concluding a segment with that same, now modified picture. For a completed film, he ends up with just several drawings instead of the usual thousands for more traditional work.

He develops the plot, if his dreamlike sequences can be called that, as he works, rather than following a storyboard. It's the very physicality of the

work that gets Kentridge into the story, the charcoal itself perhaps suggesting where the drawings go next. "The drawing doesn't begin as a moral project," he said in an interview with author and curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev. "It starts from the pleasure of putting charcoal marks on paper."

The shrouded inner lives of his characters—how they merge and diverge from their outer selves—provide much of the drama for his work. *Stereoscope* illustrates the latest personality developments for his three main characters: Soho Eckstein, the greedy developer and real-estate tycoon; his wife, Mrs. Eckstein; and Felix Teitlebaum, a quiet, reflective, perpetually nude man and Soho's alter-ego. By the time we get to the end of the eight-and-a-half-minute film, Soho's empire has crumbled and he has lost his wife to Felix. Though he's the villain of the series, we start to feel a little sorry for him. He's drawn with a less menacing stature, his head is often held low, he broods and seems to stare passively into the face of fate. After all that has happened, we recognize the battle as an internal one and watch Soho's persona take on the characteristics of introspection and humility normally associated with Felix.

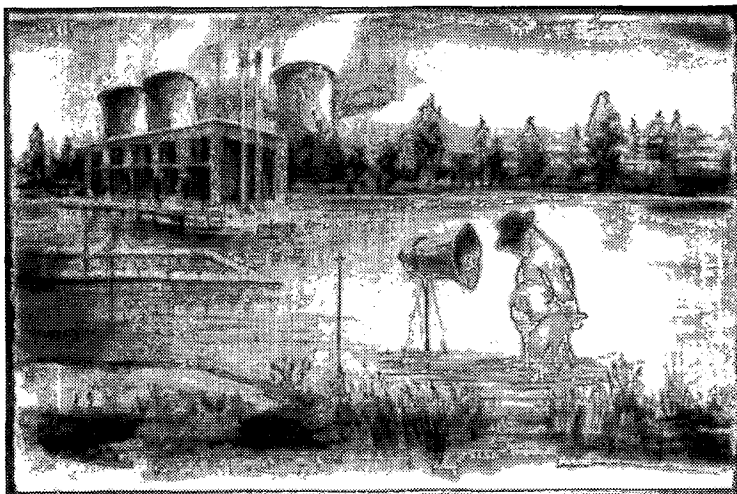
In addition to personal narratives, social commentary and questioning abound. Even if you're unaware of specifics, Kentridge churns up a sense of the unjust. His projection *Ubu Tells the Truth* takes material from the Truth and Reconciliation Commission convened in 1995 and is inspired by Alfred Jarry's 1896 play *Ubu Roi*. In Kentridge's version, Ubu, stripping his outer garb, morphs into a video camera. He then dances with a black cat, who at different times is Soho's companion, agent, spy, tool or protector. The cat ambles in and out of scenes and in a split-second morphs into a piece of office equipment or a telephone or a bomb.

The ubiquitous, mysterious cat dances to Hawaiian slack-key guitar music, part of an exceptionally odd and varied soundtrack of voices and loud, banging noises. The film builds to a feverish pitch, culminating in video footage of police shooting and beating black South Africans. Ubu-cum-recorder shoots a man three times in the head, the body



reeling backward. He places a bomb under the fresh corpse and blows it up. He gathers up the pieces of the body into a pile and then blows them up. Finally, he collects these bits and blows them up once more, until the remains are scattered like stars across the night sky. Kentridge didn't dredge up this bizarre act from his imagination: It is what South African police called "Buddha," the act of blowing up a body over and over until it is unrecognizable.

By the end of *Ubu*, it's hard to tell who the bad guy is supposed to be. Kentridge senses danger from those who claim to know the answer to complex and timeless questions. "To say that one needs art, or politics, that incorporate ambiguity and contradiction is not to say that one then stops recognizing and condemning things as evil," he told Christov-Bakargiev. "However, it might stop one being so utterly convinced of the certainty of one's own solutions. There needs to be a strong understanding of fallibility and how the very act of



Left: from *Stereoscope*, 1999.
Opposite: *Dancing Man*, 1998.

certainty or authoritativeness can bring disasters." Illustrating this ideal, his drawings often appear unfinished, unsettled and sketchy.

Looking at the aftermath of his films—pictures that were drawn and redrawn—which comprise much of what is hung on the gallery walls, is tell-tale. They hint at things past: violent strikes on dirty, marked-up paper; ghostly images of words that have been erased, reading "FELIX" or "hair?" To make the pages of a book turn on film, Kentridge first must literally rub them out on paper and then redraw them, like so much history that is too troublesome

to record precisely. Charcoal marks, which are easily erased even by a breath, leave traces in much the same way as turned pages or rotted corpses. When the film runs and the pages of a book rustle in the wind, each leaf leaves behind a fading imprint, the memory of itself and of the book's contents, the story.

It may be Kentridge's ability to articulate ambiguities, both personal and political, that makes him now so cherished an artist. But surely, too, it is his sheer skill at bringing a charcoal drawing to life, making it move around in time and space. A Dutch curator was sitting next to me on the dark couch during the film series. At moments of clarity, he explained the films to his two children: "These are the poor people protesting the greedy man." But at other times all he could do was mumble, mostly to himself: "Isn't it beautiful?" ■

Hilary Russ is a freelance writer and editor living in Manhattan.

A Little Help for Our Friends

When major newspapers are shrinking their book review sections, and fine magazines like *Feed* and *Lingua Franca* have disappeared from the permanent altogether, it's heartening to welcome, amid the sad fortunes of what we bloodlessly call "economic downturn," two new vigorous outlets for cultural writing and the arts.

Croonenbergh's Fly, a journal scrappily published by *In These Times* contributor Philip Connors, offers a choice mix of fiction, poetry, photography and criticism. His first issue begins with a short story about romantic ennui and prehistoric cave paintings, and ends with a lively tour through the British gangster cinema. In between, you find, among other odds and ends, pictures of burros necking in New Mexico, a poem describing chess pieces "carved out of bone" and a piece of sports writing taking well-deserved shots at New York star pitcher for Team Globalization, Thomas Lincecum of the *New York Times*.

A strange mix? The journal takes its name from Norman Maclean's novella *A River Runs Through It*, in which one George Croonenberghs prepares a

fly-fishing lure that "had about everything on it, from deer hair to fool-hen feathers." The novella posits a "curiosity theory" of fly fishing, that "fish, like men, will sometimes strike at things just to find out what they are." (Stickler grammarians might ask: Shouldn't it then be *Croonenberghs' Fly*? Phil tells me that he "changed the position of the apostrophe for aesthetic reasons, which trumped fidelity to the reference.") Connors and his diverse gang of contributors, some of whom you already know from the bestseller lists or (more modestly) the *In These Times* culture section, may well have you hooked.

The Common Review, a new magazine published by the Great Books Foundation, is a very different enterprise, but an equally welcome addition to the conversation. Peter Temes, Great Books' president, writes in his inaugural letter that "it is the imagination that manufactures the tools of daily commerce, and those tools are far more humane and valuable when the imaginations that craft them grapple with the politics of faraway nations and the meanings of things like art, love [and] justice."

That democratic and humanist impulse admirably informs the eclectic tastes of editor Daniel Born, who procures literary, cultural and political views from a hotel in Phnom Penh, a jail in San Francisco, a conference in Ljubljana. My particular favorite from the first issue is a penetrating piece on hard-boiled Harlem chronicler Chester Himes, but the biggest eyebrow-raiser, for some readers, may come from cultural studies bigshot Michael Bérubé. In a surprisingly conciliatory and positive review of Tom Frank's *One Market Under God*, Bérubé in effect tries to bury the hatchet on the left's longstanding internecine feud over the excesses of pomo cultural studies—and it's about time.

—Joe Knowles

Contact *Croonenbergh's Fly* at 3410 33rd St. #4B, Astoria, NY 11106. Single issues cost \$7; three-issue subscriptions are \$18. The *Common Review* is published quarterly for \$3 per issue or \$9 per annual subscription; drop them a line at 35 E. Wacker Drive, Suite 2300, Chicago, IL 60601 or at tcr@greatbooks.org. (But please, nobody tell these publishers that a recession's on.)

Gun Crazy

By Steve Weinberg

Most serious trade books by major national publishers are never challenged on grounds of accuracy. Those relatively few that

Arming America: The Origins of a National Gun Culture

By Michael A. Bellesiles
Vintage Books
603 pages, \$16

are challenged rarely come to the attention of pleasure-readers, because the challenges usually are played out in specialized academic journals.

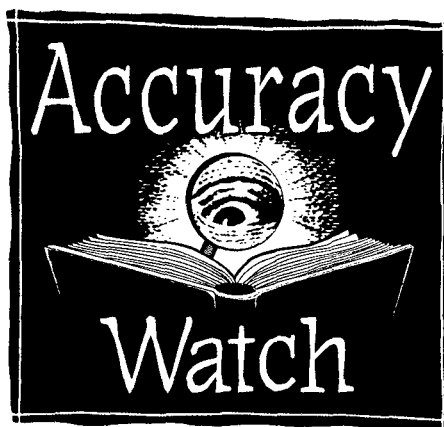
Yet it was no surprise during 2000 when *Arming America: The Origins of a National Gun Culture* violated the norm. The author, Michael A. Bellesiles, had an inkling the book would be lavishly praised and passionately denounced. So did the editors and publicists at Knopf, one of the most respected publishing houses in the United States. They understood that any book about the right to keep and bear arms pits one reading of the Second Amendment (that it applies to every American citizen) against another (that it applies only to members of state militias).

Knopf's trade-paperback sister Vintage Books has just reissued *Arming America* in a version that costs \$16 instead of \$30. So the controversy is quite likely to reheat during the rest of 2001 and into 2002. In the face of the attacks on the hardcover's thematic and factual accuracy, Bellesiles and Knopf have not budged. They considered their critics' points, then made nary a substantive change in the text.

Bellesiles is a history professor at Emory University and director of Emory's Center for the Study of Violence. Though he spends much of his typical year inside the ivory tower, Bellesiles has traveled widely within the gun culture, pro- and anti-, because of his research. He had plenty of reason to believe that partisans of restrictive gun laws would hail his book, and that partisans of untrammelled gun ownership would despise it. Bellesiles says he is no partisan; in fact, he is a gun owner and

collector. He is simply reflecting the historical evidence in his book, putting aside his personal views about guns.

What Bellesiles has done to raise so much fuss is use probate records from the 18th and 19th centuries as a way to gauge gun ownership in the United States. He expected to find evidence that would prove what gun advocates have taken on faith: Americans have loved guns since the nation's formation, making them as common in pioneer households as iron skillet. But the probate records sampled by



Bellesiles in region after region suggested a surprising turn: that at most one-fifth of households contained guns, and many of those guns were unuseable.

What follows, based on page 266 of the book, is, despite its surface mundaneness, probably the most controversial of all Bellesiles' paragraphs. Transcripts of a dead man's possessions are an imperfect source, Bellesiles writes, and there has been a long debate on their reliability. Nevertheless, probate records do offer a snapshot of common household objects. He hedges by explaining that some inventories are more meticulous than others, and some regions, especially the South, had a bias toward property owners. Bellesiles then goes on to conclude:

A region of high literacy and property ownership was thus likely to leave

the most accurate records. ... In this context it is significant that only 14 percent of the 1,200 probate records studied from the frontiers of northern New England and western Pennsylvania during the years 1765 to 1790 included firearms. The same regions in 1819 to 1821 reveal only a slight increase in ownership, to 16.2 percent. The inventories reported just over half (53 percent) of these guns in the first period as either broken or in some sense dysfunctional, decreasing to 31 percent in the second survey period. ... Obviously guns could have been passed on to heirs before the death of the original owner. Yet the wills, which generally list such bequests no matter how minor the item, contained only a handful of firearms, producing only an insignificant alteration in the total figure of gun ownership. ... Almost all of these probate inventories are for white males. Most states had laws forbidding blacks from owning guns, and none of the very few women's inventories lists a gun. The inventories, therefore, are from the people most likely to own guns—less than a quarter of the total population (white males over the age of 15 made up 23.8 percent of the 1820 census). ... It would appear that at no time prior to 1850 did more than a tenth of the people own guns.

Wow, I thought, when I read that passage. What meticulous scholarship, with appropriate caveats. Having worked with probate records myself, I found Bellesiles' use of such documents exemplary. But not everybody agrees with me.

Joyce Lee Malcolm, for example. She is a history professor at Bentley College and the author of the book *To Keep and Bear Arms: The Origins of an Anglo-American Right*. Malcolm's review of Bellesiles' book in the January issue of *Reason* magazine contains this passage: "Readers and reviewers are entitled to assume that a professional historian will present evidence fully and fairly, although we might disagree with his interpretation. And any author can make mistakes. But Bellesiles' 'myth busting' findings are not supported by his sources. Moreover, he presents a skewed selec-

tion of records, dismisses contradictory information, and even alters the language of quotations and statutes."

The most damning specific cited by Malcolm is a re-examination of Bellesiles' probate sampling (recounted on page 109) in Providence, Rhode Island. Malcolm attributes the re-examination of the 186 records to James Lindgren, a Northwestern University law professor. Malcolm informs *Reason* magazine's readers of Lindgren's statement that "virtually everything Bellesiles said about these records was false."

Unlike many authors under attack, Bellesiles has responded. He built a Web site (www.emory.edu/HISTORY/BELLESILES) devoted to the strengths and weaknesses of using probate records for research. The text runs to 11,000 words, explaining the difficulties with old probate records, including illegible penmanship, odd spellings, faded ink, water damage and math errors. I found it instructive in general and persuasively responsive to the critics.

Gun advocates have taken on faith that Americans have always loved guns, that in pioneer days guns were as common as iron skilletts.

In an April letter to the *Wall Street Journal*, Bellesiles responded to an editorial page commentary by Kimberly A. Strassel attacking his book along Lindgren's lines. He commented that Lindgren "has devoted enormous energy to attacking [my] database by turning to other sources. His attack on *Arming America*, to which I have repeatedly responded, has been sent to every historical list server I know of, and copies were sent with calls for my immediate termination to nearly everyone at Emory University, from the board of trustees to the support staff."

Bellesiles says that he has been unable to persuade Lindgren "that I conducted my research from the source documents on site in the archives, not from published compilations. Those archives are listed on my Web site, and the exact replication of my research would require a scholar to devote the time to traveling to those archives as I did. It puzzles me that my integrity is questioned because my numbers do not match those of two published sample sets I did not use. ... If I study one database on any subject and come up with statistics different from another scholar's database, surely that does not mean that either is wrong. Rather, it creates a historical question of some interest that should be calmly explored."

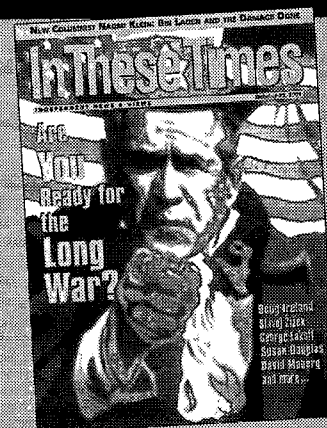
I cannot vouch for the accuracy of every number in Bellesiles' book. But I can vouch for his methodology, applaud his willingness to refine his techniques and cheer his responsiveness to his critics, many of whom would be easy to dismiss because of their ideological biases.

While Bellesiles is preparing further responses, his editor at Knopf, Jane Garrett, has issued a supportive statement: "We are very familiar with the charges made against Michael. That there is a disagreement among reputable scholars ... comes as no surprise. Reasoned debate is what historians thrive on." Garrett mentions that Knopf has supplied copies of the book to scholars who will be examining the controversy in the pages of *The William and Mary Quarterly*, an academic journal focusing on early American history.

At bottom, the furor is encouraging. Bellesiles' book stops in 1877, and takes no overt position on current policy debates over gun ownership. Yet his esoteric history has spawned debate reaching the letters columns of daily newspapers over, of all things, previously forgotten probate records as reliable sources. If only we were always so mindful of the books we read. ■

Steve Weinberg is the author of two biographies, with a third in progress from his home in Columbia, Missouri. He has also published a book about the craft of biography. He can be reached via e-mail at weinbergs@missouri.edu.

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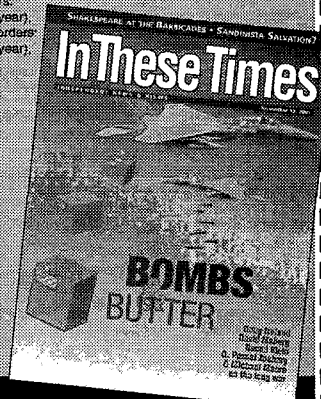
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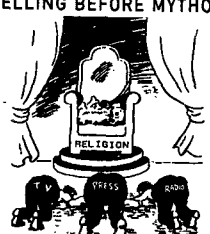
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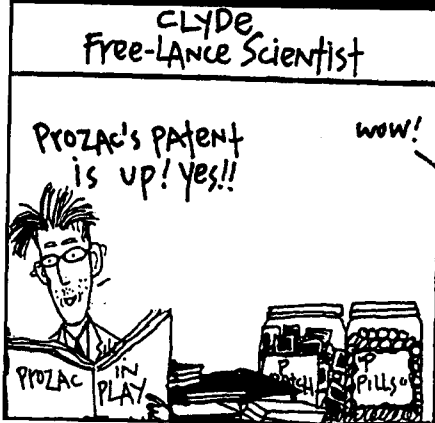
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Prozac's patent is up! yes!!

wow!

"I've been waiting FOR this DAY! Now I CAN DEVELOP MY PROZAC PATCH. It's sensitive to MOOD SWINGS, RELEASING A MEASURED DOSE every time it SENSES GLOOM". HE SAID, "OR MAYBE CHOCOLATE-COVERED PROZAC MINTS." "HOW ABOUT TREATED TOOTH PASTE?" I SUGGESTED. "IT MIGHT ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO BRUSH." "too MANY ideas," CLYDE MOANED. "MY HEAD IS SPINNING." "Let me fix you a VALIUM AND GRILLED CHEESE SANDWICH," I SAID, APPLYING A COOL COMPRESS to His brow.

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War on the Weak

Continued from back page

Because, make no mistake, oil gluttony is what got us into this holy war, and it's a deep tar pit. I would like us to sign the Kyoto agreement today and to reduce our fossil-fuel emissions with legislation that will ease us into safer, sensibly reorganized lives. If this were the face we showed the world, and the model we helped bring about elsewhere, I expect we could get along with a military budget the size of Iceland's.

How can I take anything but a child's view of a war in which men are acting like children? What they're serving is not justice, it's simply vengeance. Adults bring about justice using the laws of common agreement. Uncivilized criminals are still held accountable through civilized institutions; we abolished stoning long ago. The World Court and the entire Muslim world stand ready to judge Osama bin Laden and his accessories. If we were to put a few billion dollars into food, health care and education instead of bombs, you can bet we'd win over enough friends to find out where he's hiding.

And I'd like to point out, since no one else has, that the Taliban is an alleged accessory, not the perpetrator—a legal point quickly cast aside in the rush to find a sovereign target to bomb. The word "intelligence" keeps cropping up, but I feel like I'm standing on a playground where the little boys are all screaming at each other, "He started it!" and throwing rocks that keep taking out another eye, another tooth. I keep looking around for somebody's mother to come on the scene saying, "Boys! Boys! Who started it cannot possibly be the issue here. People are getting hurt."

I am somebody's mother, so I will say that now: The issue is people are getting hurt. We need to take a moment's time out to review the monstrous waste of an endless cycle of retaliation. The biggest weapons don't win this one, guys. When there are people on earth willing to give up their lives in hatred and use our own domestic airplanes as bombs, it's clear that we can't out-technologize them. You can't beat cancer by killing every cell in the body—or you could, I guess, but the point would

be lost. This is a war of who can hate the most. There is no limit to that escalation. It will only end when we have the guts to say it really doesn't matter who started it, and begin to try to understand, then alter, the forces that generate hatred.

We have always been at war, though the citizens of the United States were mostly insulated from what that really felt

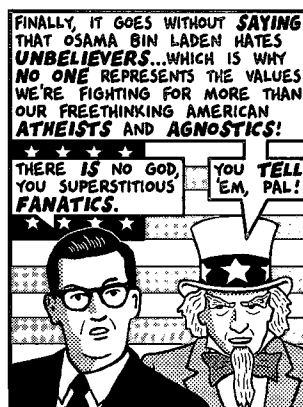
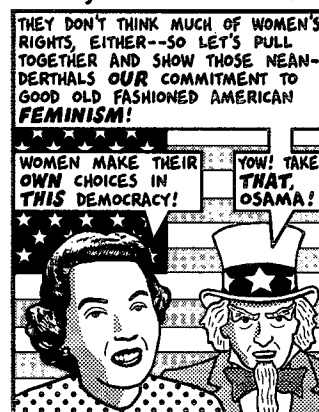
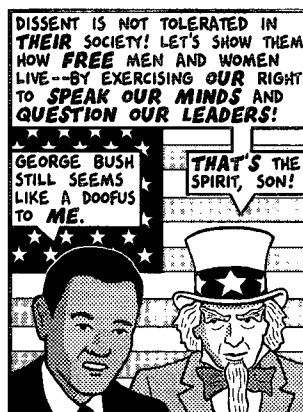
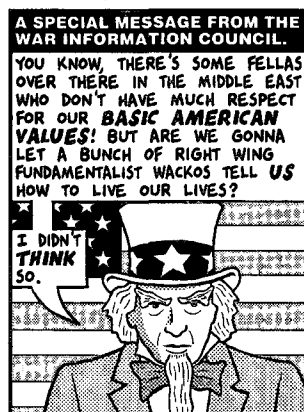
HOW CAN I TAKE ANYTHING BUT A CHILD'S VIEW OF A WAR IN WHICH MEN ARE ACTING LIKE CHILDREN?

like until September 11. Then, suddenly, we began to say, "The world has changed. This is something new." If there really is something new under the sun in the way of war, some alternative to the way people have always died when heavy objects are dropped on them from above, then, please, in the name of Heaven, I would like to see it. I would like to see it now.

Barbara Kingsolver is the author of, among other books, *The Poisonwood Bible* and *Prodigal Summer*. This article will appear in a forthcoming collection of essays.

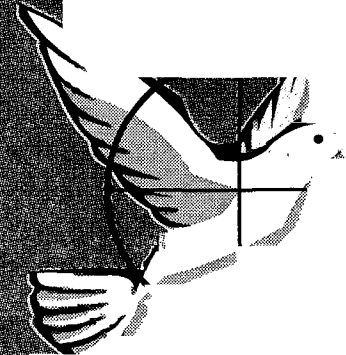
THIS MODERN WORLD

by TOM TOMORROW



WAR ON THE WEAK

By Barbara Kimmerly



I CANNOT FIND THE GLORY IN THIS DAY

When I picked up the newspaper and saw "America Strikes Back!" blazed boastfully across it in letters I swear were 10 inches tall—shouldn't they reserve at least one type size for something like, say, nuclear war?—my heart sank. We've answered one terrorist act with another, raining death on the most war-scarred, terrified populace that ever crept to a doorway and looked out.

The small plastic boxes of food we dropped also are a travesty. Many of these are untouched, of course—Afghans have spent their lives learning terror of anything hurled at them from the sky. Meanwhile, the genuine food aid on which so many depended for survival has been halted by the war. We've killed those who were too poor or crippled to flee, plus four humanitarian aid workers who coordinated the removal of land mines from the beleaguered Afghan soil. That office is now rubble, and so is my heart.

I am going to keep pleading against this madness. I'll get scolded for it, I know. I've already been called every name in the Rush Limbaugh handbook: traitor, sinner, naive, liberal, peacenik, whiner. I'm told I am dangerous because I might get in the way of this holy project we've undertaken to keep dropping heavy objects from the sky until we've wiped out every last person who could potentially hate us.

Some people are praying for my immortal soul, and some have offered to buy me a one-way ticket out of the country to anywhere. I accept these gifts with a gratitude equal in measure to the spirit of generosity in which they were offered. People threaten vaguely, "She wouldn't feel this way if her child had died in the war!" (I feel this way precisely because I can imag-

ine that horror.) More subtle adversaries simply say I am ridiculous, a dreamer who takes a child's view of the world, imagining it can be made better than it is. The more sophisticated approach, they suggest, is to accept that we are all on a jolly road trip down the maw of catastrophe, so shut up and drive.

I fight that, I fight it as if I'm drowning. When I get to feeling I am an army of one standing out on the plain waving my ridiculous little flag of hope, I call up a friend or two. We remind ourselves in plain English that the last time we got to elect somebody, the majority of us, by a straight popular-vote count, did not ask for the guy who is currently telling us we will win this war and not be "misunderestimated." We aren't standing apart from the crowd, we are the crowd. There are millions of us, surely, who know how to look life in the eye, however awful things get, and still try to love it back.

It is not naive to propose alternatives to war. We could be the kindest nation on Earth, inside and out. I look at the bigger picture and see that many nations with fewer resources than ours have found solutions to problems that seem to baffle us. I'd like an end to corporate welfare so we could put that money into ending homelessness. I would like a humane health-care system organized along the lines of Canada's. I'd like the efficient public-transit system of Paris in my city, thank you. I'd like us to consume energy at the modest level that Europeans do, and then go them one better. I'd like a government that subsidizes renewable energy sources instead of forcefully patrolling the globe to protect oil gluttony.

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